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MORE SERMONS FROM LIFE

By

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Annals.

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Foreword

FROM time to time during the years of my ministry it has been my custom to preach on Sunday evenings a series of sermons which I call SERMONS FROM LIFE. I think, all in all, I have preached five such series. It is, of course, only at considerable intervals of time that such a series can be preached; for the sermons are based upon the experiences of a minister's life on the personal side, and it takes time for these to accumulate. The sermons are not the abstractions of the closet or the study, but are born out of the sorrows, struggles, sins, and aspirations of men and women.

No confidences are revealed, for the incidents are dealt with in a way that completely hides and disguises the chief actors. In some instances, however, as in the sermon, "Your Refusal Saved Me," there have been both the permission and the desire of the chief actor in the event that I should make some good use of it for the help and encouragement of others.

The enthusiastic response which these SERMONS FROM LIFE have met with from the general public, and the kind reception given to the former volume of SERMONS FROM LIFE prompts me to send out this new series.

These sermons, whatever their faults, are warm with the breath of human life and human experience. It is my hope and my prayer that as preached from the pulpit, and as now sent out in printed form, the sermons will make a little clearer and a little brighter the way of life through this world, and will help tempted, struggling, and sorrowing souls by shedding upon their path the Light that comes from the Life and Words of Christ, and from the great Hopes of our Christian Faith.

CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY.

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"Peter went out, and wept bitterly."
LUKE 22: 62.

I. *"Oh, how could I ever have done it!"*

RAIN! Rain! Rain! Out on the street the cold, pelting, winter rain; within the room, the cold winter rain of remorse. Rain! Rain! Rain!

"Oh, how could I ever have done it!" This was the cry uttered by one of the successors to Peter. No doubt that was what Peter thought, and what Peter said, when he went out into the night and wept bitterly after he had betrayed his Lord. "How could I ever have done it—denied and cursed the Lord who loved me, the One whom I wanted to serve, and to whom I said I would be faithful even unto death, and for whose sake I smote the servant of the high priest in the Garden? How could I ever have denied Him, who gave me so many special messages, and took me up with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration, and to the place where He knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane!" Bitter tears those must have been that Peter wept that night, almost the most bitter

that man has shed, and the saddest since Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden.

That was what this woman was saying. In brief, this was her story. Unloved by her husband, she had fallen in with the son of a well-known man, and had gone off to the city where I saw her, and there had lived in sin. So as not to bring pain to her mother, and to hide the real situation, she wrote and received her letters at the Young Women's Christian Association. Then came days of loneliness and nights of silent weeping. Then an invincible desire and purpose to confess and return. The way of transgression had suddenly become hard. Its flowers had withered, and the streams along which it ran had dried up. Now conscience awoke with a stab and a start. The woman sought the nearest church and the nearest minister. At the end of the interview she promised to return to her home, her children, and her mother.

"Oh, how could I ever have done it!" I hear her cry now as plainly as you hear it. In that cry there seemed to be more of the pain of remorse than in any cry I have heard. It was a deep, perplexed, agonizing interrogation of self, to know why and how she could have taken the course which had ended in this visit, these tears, and this exclamation of sorrow and remorse. The history, as she related it, was there plainly written. It was clear and un-

mistakable. One step had led easily and naturally unto another, until the whole sad history had been completed. Yet, in another sense, it all seemed so impossible to her. It would have seemed impossible in prospect, and unthinkable if it had been proposed to her; and now after it was over it seemed equally impossible. Yet, it had been done. "How could I ever have done it!" And outside on the street the rain poured, and inside the rain of bitter tears. She went out into the night and wept bitterly.

The first observation that I made on this story is that when retribution strikes, it makes no distinction between those who are weak and those who are depraved; that is, between those who are led on unthinkingly by others into wrong deeds, and those who deliberately and wickedly plan them and do them. Here was one who was more sinned against than sinning. There had been no deliberate purpose to do wrong. The soul had been carried along from one stage to another. Yet the distress of her situation was just the same as if it had been deliberately and wickedly chosen. No matter what she had intended or purposed, husband, children, mother, home, all had been forsaken. Now the bitterness of her sorrow and remorse was not alleviated, but, on the contrary, intensified by the fact that she had never contemplated such a course of history. Mark, in his account of Peter's denial, as usual adds a

graphic thought or touch of his own. Matthew and Luke say merely that Peter went out and wept bitterly. But Mark says, "When he *thought* thereon, he wept." Peter thought, but too late. So this woman thought, but too late.

At first, you might be inclined to feel that this ought not to be so, that even in the judgments of this world there ought to be a great distinction between those who are led unthinkingly into evil and those who plan it in their hearts. But in a moral ordering of the world, no other plan is possible. If people could do wrong through weakness and inattention, and yet not suffer for it, the moral fiber of the world would quickly degenerate.

Let this, then, sink deep into our minds, this fact about the working of the moral law. When the broken law recoils it strikes with equal severity the wicked and the weak. This must be because, even before people are led carelessly and thoughtlessly into evil, the inner self must first give its consent. Not without warnings, and not without the inner protest of the soul, does anyone give his hand to do evil. Remember, then, that the fact that you may be able to look back and say that you never planned or contemplated such a course of conduct, and that it was the last thing in your mind—remember that this will not in any way alleviate the bitterness of distress, nor mend in the slightest way what has been

done. Whether one takes it one's self, or is persuaded to start on it by another, the way of the transgressor is hard.

"Inexorable laws are made
That ring men's paths around,
Laws none escape and none evade;
The stars themselves are bound.

Through all the universe there runs
Immutable design.
And from the atoms to the suns
Its countless tendrils twine.

From age to age, through day and night,
They move without a flaw,
With sure rewards for wrong or right,
The agencies of law.

Has one done ill? Though man may fail
To glimpse his dark intent,
There is no power which can avail
To stay his punishment.

Do good, and every kindly deed
By good will be repaid.
Thus have unchanging laws decreed,
Since suns and stars were made." [1]

The second thing that we learn from this incident and from the exclamation, "How could I ever have done it!" is that there lurks under every breast an unknown self. The cry of this woman, vainly wish-

[1] Author unknown.

ing that the past had been obliterated and exclaiming, "How could I ever have done it!" lets us know of that other and dangerous self which sleeps in the breast of every man, whether he be the worst transgressor or the most advanced saint. This sinister self is a patient and relentless hunter, and waits to find the soul off its guard, when it can hurl its deadly shaft. How true and solemn was that word which God spake to Cain, when He would have warned him back from the sin which he was soon to commit: "Sin coucheth at the door." The figure is that of the wild animal, which crouches, flattened to the ground, waiting for the chance when it can make its fatal leap. One moment, and years of vigilance and watchfulness are cancelled. In a moment of time the blow has been struck!

You might be tempted to say that you could do this or that; that this proposal might find some foothold in your life; but as for that other thing, it is unthinkable and inconceivable—you could never even be tempted to do it. But how do you know? You may be as ignorant of your own heart as Hazael was of his. When the Prophet Elisha foretold to Hazael all the iniquities which he was to commit, and the cruelties he would perpetrate, he cried out in unfeigned horror, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Yet the next day he murdered the king and quickly proceeded to do far

worse than Elisha had predicted of him. The safe thing is to think nothing in man foreign to yourself. The Bible's appraisal of the heart is based on the best scientific and experimental knowledge, and that appraisal is this: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

A third fact that we learn from this story is that all moral breakdowns have a preparatory stage. If in this instance, the first steps had been resisted or avoided before the desperate evil and distress of the last stage had been sighted and while yet the action or attitude had raised the question of right or wrong in the conscience, the last stage would have been avoided. We do not travel the whole distance to evil by a sudden leap. A careful examination of the ground over which we have passed shows that we have gone *step by step.*

That it was so in this case was quite evident from what this woman related she had said one day to her husband—"Remember, I am not made of iron." There, at once, was a fatal concession, one which opened the way for all which followed. When a dam goes out with a rush and roar, and a flood of waters, the collapse seems to be sudden. In reality, it was not. All that was sudden was the breaking under the last strain of the wall of the dam. But day after day, week after week, month after month, the seeking, surging waters had been fretting and

wearing away the stones and timbers of the dam. There are men just like that kind of dam: they are just waiting for the push and urge of a sufficiently strong temptation to break them down, and when they go down, with sorrow and pain to themselves and to their friends, men will say, "How sudden, unaccountable! Who would have thought it! How could he ever have done it!" But not so. It was not sudden at all. It was the last stage in a long process of corruption and deterioration. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me."

Watch the beginnings of evil and the images which appear on the surface of the pool, that deep and treacherous pool of the heart's imagination and desire. No foe may be in sight now. Yet a weakening of the attitude of resistance to evil may prove the beginning of transgression. "I fell," said the unfortunate man in *The Silence of Dean Maitland*, "because I deemed myself above temptation." A little fire, a little trifling with temptation, and behold, how great a matter it kindleth, a blaze so fierce and devastating that floods of tears cannot extinguish it.

Another safeguard is to be warned by the lives of others. If lives of great men all around us remind us that we can make our lives sublime, there are also plenty of wrecked, broken, hurt, maimed, damaged souls around us to remind us that we can make ship-

wreck of our lives, and put out the light of the soul. Say to yourself, whenever you see or read of a life that has been overcome with temptation, "I might have been that man. But for the grace of God, I might be where he is. Therefore, my soul, be on thy guard."

Keep close to God in prayer. Have regular times and seasons for prayer; and do not worry if you do not always feel in the spirit of prayer, or if at times your prayers seem cold and mechanical and to rise no higher than the roof of the room where you pray. What of that? There are times when you do not feel hungry, and have no desire for food. Yet you take food so that the body may have what it requires for nourishment. So is it with your prayers. The very habit of prayer helps to guard the soul. I have heard of men who said they fell when they stopped praying. But I have never heard of anyone who fell while on his knees.

So far, this has been a message for those who would be kept from the path of evil. But now what shall we say of those, and for those, who either with or without such counsels, or in spite of them, find themselves in the place of remorse and sorrow, and whose music is the chord which inspired this sermon, "How could I ever have done it!" For them what has been said thus far refers only to the past. They, like Peter, have thought thereon and wept, but

thought too late. What is needed now is help, comfort, new courage, new faith, and new hope for the future. Here it is that we see the indispensableness and the preciousness of Christ as a Saviour. He is great as a Guide, but greater, infinitely greater, as a Saviour of the lost.

Mark Rutherford, in his piercing autobiography, tells how he was helped out of despair by a friend. "I should like," he says, "to add one more Beatitude to those of the Gospels, and to say, 'Blessed are they that heal us of self-despisings.' Of all services which can be done to man, I know of none more precious." Here the great minister is Christ. There is Peter, out in the night, weeping bitterly, his life wrecked, his career as a disciple apparently ended. But here is another scene, and only a few days after. Christ is speaking to Peter by the fireside on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Hear what He says! Not a syllable of reproach; but only one question, thrice repeated—"Peter, lovest thou me?" And then this, "Go and feed my sheep." There is a popular poem which runs like this:

"I wish that there were some wonderful place
In the Land of Beginning Again:
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
And all of our poor selfish grief
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door
And never put on again.

"I wish we could come on it all unaware,
Like the hunter who finds a lost trail;
And I wish that the one whom our blindness had done
The greatest injustice of all
Could be there at the gates like an old friend that waits
For the comrade he's gladdest to hail." [3]

Yes, in Jesus Christ there is the Land of Beginning Again. His pierced hand leads us to the path that brings us to that land. The way to the new life and the new land may seem too hard and too long for the weary feet and the disheartened soul. But Christ goes with you. Cease to wonder how the mistake could have been made, and determine that you will now keep close to God. Good men and good women are praying for you, and God is waiting for you at the gate.

There is a medieval legend of a liquid which poured out upon ashes transforms them and makes them shine like precious gold. Only a myth in the chemical world, but in the spiritual world, through Jesus Christ, a grand and blessed fact! His forgiveness transfigures even the dust and ashes of our sins and makes them glow with the light of heaven itself. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

[3] Louise Fletcher Tarkington.

"In a moment of time."
LUKE 4: 5.

II. *"There was no next time"*

IT was one of the first funerals that I had conducted in Philadelphia. Little of it comes back to me now, save that the circumstances seemed more than ordinarily sad and depressing. The man was unknown to me; and the only mourner and attendant at the grave was his wife, her countenance so heavily veiled that I could not discern her features. When the coffin had been lowered into the grave, and the words of committal pronounced, I shook hands with the woman and drove off.

Some years later a woman came forward at the close of a service in the church, and told me it was her husband that I had buried on that occasion. They had occupied a position of some standing in England. After long years of married life, and with a grown family, the husband forsook his home and his honor and came out to this country, where he lived in sin. But when he was taken seriously ill,

he cabled for his wronged and deserted wife to come and be at his bedside. She took the first steamer and arrived shortly before his death. At the end of the first visit she had with him at the hospital, he said to her as he bade her goodbye, "The next time you come, be sure to bring your Bible." His prodigal heart was turning back to the Father's House and to the training of his childhood. "But," said the woman to me, "that was the last visit. There was no next time."

"There was no next time!" How often since then have those words echoed in my mind, speaking in impressive accents of those duties, those opportunities, those responsibilities, those persons, for which and for whom there will be no next time. As much as any words I have heard spoken, those words, "There was no next time," have impressed upon me the value of a moment of time. How much can be won or lost in a moment of time! How much injury or how much good we can do to our souls in a moment of time!

Life for us is made up of time. The day and the week, the month and the year are made up of moments of time. There are 1,080 fewer moments of time left for you to use or to neglect than there were this time a week ago, and this time next Sunday there will be 1,080 less than there are today. So time pours on like a relentless stream.

One of the interesting cathedrals of Europe is that at Strassburg. From the platform of the tower, 461 feet above the city, you command a grand view of the surrounding country. At your feet is the ancient city of Strassburg, modern and handsome, yet still medieval, with its narrow streets and tile roofs, and projecting windows and gables. In front are the rivers Ill and the Brusch, and far in the distance the great river which seems to meet you wherever you go in Southern Germany, the noble Rhine. Between the city and the river are the villas, the farms, the orchards, and the deep forests, fresh and green from the summer rains.

The cathedral is one of the noblest in Europe. Commenced in 1015, it was finished in 1445, and thus is like an incarnation of the thought and life and worship of centuries. In the south transept of the cathedral is the renowned clock. This clock not only preaches from hour to hour a great and solemn sermon, but is a monument to the greatness of the human mind. Among its many intricate devices is one which marks the eclipses. So ingenious is the combination that it will last forever. As long as the earth wheels round the sun, that device, if it be preserved, will mark the eclipses.

Each day at the hour of noon, the statues of the Twelve Apostles emerge and pass in reverent procession before the figure of Christ, who lifts his

hand to bless them, while a cock flaps his wings and crows three times. In the center are four figures representing the four ages of life, and in the midst of them stands death. At the first quarter, glad childhood emerges and strikes the bell; at the second quarter, rosy youth comes forth; at the third, sober manhood, and lifts its robust arm; and at the last quarter, feeble and decrepit old age lifts wearily its arm to strike with his hammer. When he has finished, death lifts his arm and strikes the hour. Childhood, youth, manhood, old age, death. In the crowd which stood on the pavement of the cathedral looking up at the clock, there were some who belonged to the first quarter, childhood; some to youth's golden morn; some to manhood's sober day; and some to the last quarter and the feebleness of age. And one could see too plainly that ere long death would lift his hammer and strike the passing of their life.

To stand and watch those figures strike the bell, one after the other, was subduing, impressive, solemnizing. It was a great and unforgettable sermon. It made one wish to apply one's heart unto wisdom. It made one ask one's self, "What have I done with my life? What am I doing with it now? Even while I stand and silently watch the hands of the clock proceed around the face of the dial, and one after another the five figures come forth to strike

their blow, my own life, your life, is moving inexorably onward to that moment of time when the fifth figure shall lift his hammer to strike."

A moment of time! Yet a moment of time is sufficient in which to gain or lose one's own soul. There are always preparations and accumulated habits and tendencies which help to decide the action of a moment. Nevertheless, life's great decisions are the decisions of a moment of time. Napoleon used to say that in every battle there were a few minutes when the issue hung in the balance. What one army did in that brief period decided the battle. In a moment of time Satan showed Christ the kingdoms of this world, and offered them to him if He would fall down and worship him; and in the same moment of time, Christ rejected the temptation and started on his path to Calvary.

I. The Things Which Can Be Lost in a Moment of Time and the Injury Which Can Be Done to Us in a Moment of Time

How different it would have been with the human race, if in that moment of time Christ had yielded to the temptation of Satan. For the eternal good of the human race, Christ in that moment was strong. But how much can be lost, and has been lost, in a weak moment. Esau came in hot and hungry from the fields where he had been hunting, and smelled the

savor of the pottage that his brother Jacob was cooking. When he asked for it, the crafty Jacob said he would give him the pottage in exchange for the birthright. Esau, the slave at that moment to his appetite, said, "What good will the birthright do me when I am about to die? Give me the pottage." The bargain was struck. In a moment of time Esau lost his birthright. When his appetite was satisfied, then the hunger of his soul awoke, and he realized with bitter tears what he had done. "He found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears"; that is, no change in the position of the birthright. In a single weak moment he had thrown away his highest possession. That is a tragedy which has been repeated over and over again. Oh, the bitter tears, the sorrow, the anguish, the woe, the remorse, the despair, that have had their beginning in a moment of time!

On a soft summer evening King David, walking on the roof of his palace, saw a woman bathing. In that moment of time David plunged into a deep abyss of sin and murder and crime. In the courtyard of the high priest, while Jesus was being examined within, Peter and John stood by the fire warming themselves. Peter had shown so far great bravery that night. It looked as if his boast that he would be faithful to Christ even unto prison and unto death would be made good. But a maidservant

pointed her finger at him, and said, "Thou also art one of them," and in that moment Peter began to curse and to swear, and to say, "I never knew him."

Very solemn, then, is this fact that the weakness and the folly of a moment may bring the anguish of a lifetime. No matter what the preparation has been for sin, there is a moment of time when the final decision is rendered. I have always thought that when Christ gave Judas the sop, always a token of honor at an Oriental table, and also when He stooped to wash his feet, that He was making a last appeal to the traitor. But in that moment Judas made his decision and Satan entered into him. How solemn, therefore, is the first deliberate choice of evil for any soul. The course of a long life may be determined by the action or the decision of a moment.

II. The Things Which Can Be Gained and Established in a Moment of Time

It took Christ just a moment to say "No" to the tempter. But forever now He is the helper of tempted souls and the redeemer of sinners. If in a moment Peter fell and cursed his Lord, the next moment was even greater in its significance for Peter. Christ turned at the sound of Peter's loud oaths and "looked upon him." It was the glance of a moment of time; but in that moment Peter repented and went out into the night and wept bitterly.

The two thieves hung by the side of Christ on the Cross. At first, both of them reviled Him and cursed Him and mocked Him. But in a moment of time one thief answered the visitation of God's Holy Spirit, and in that moment chose Christ and Paradise forever more. It took the Prodigal Son a long time to get from his father's house, and from honor and health and plenty to the far country where he sat diseased, in want, and in rags, envying the swine the husks which they did eat. But the resolution to go back to his father's house and to say, "Father, I have sinned," took but a moment of time. In a moment of time "he arose and went unto his father."

Those invitations which Christ gave to His disciples, to the four fishermen, Andrew, Peter, James, and John, by the Sea of Galilee, and to Matthew, the publican, as he sat at the receipt of customs, have always impressed me with the thought of what can be done in a moment of time. When they heard His voice, they rose up, left all, and followed Him. And still Christ walks down the streets of our city, and by the shores of our lakes and rivers, and says to men, "Follow me."

The life and service of the greatest of all Christians was a river which arose in a moment of time. Saul of Tarsus had lived thirty or forty years by that time, and he was to live many years more, and travel all over the world preaching Christ and Him

crucified; but all of Paul's life was summed up in a moment of time when he was smitten down on the road to Damascus and heard a voice saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." "Whereupon," Paul says, "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." God gave him a moment of time in which to choose Eternal Life; and in a moment of time Paul, for the glory of God and the good of the human race, made his choice.

Great, then, is the meaning of a moment. Great are the possibilities of a single moment of time. What you determine now may affect your destiny forever. There is time enough for all that is great and good, but you never know that there will be a next time. Time is like a river: you put your hand in the water, and you are touching the last of what has passed and the first of what is passing. A moment is too long to wait when God says, "Come." A moment is too long to linger or hesitate when conscience says, "Thou must."

When Paul was preaching to Felix in the palace at Caesarea, and reasoned with him of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come, the conscience of Felix was stirred. Felix trembled. At that moment his destiny was trembling in the balance. He might have responded to the invitation of Paul and chosen Christ and Eternal Life, and been numbered among the company of the followers of the

Lamb of God; but in that moment of time Felix said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." That convenient season never came. "There was no next time."

When God speaks to our soul, that moment of time is precious. Once on the rocky coast of Scotland a man had been lowered by a rope from the top of a cliff to a ledge in order to gather the eggs of wild sea fowl. In a careless moment he had let the rope slip away from him. Realizing his great peril and seeing the rope come swinging in towards him again, and knowing that its second swing would be shorter than the first, he waited till it reached the end of the swing and then leaped to seize it and was drawn up the cliff to safety. In a moment of time he had to choose and act. That will often be so in the destiny of the human soul.

When the crowd was passing along near the gate at Jericho, where the blind man sat begging, Bartimaeus stopped one of the crowd and asked what the noise was, what the excitement. Hurrying on, the man called out over his shoulder, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." Jesus of Nazareth!—the man who had cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, restored the paralyzed, and even opened the eyes of the blind! Jesus of Nazareth was passing by! Passing by Jericho on His way to Jerusalem and never again to return! That was the great moment for Bartimaeus.

In a moment of time he made his decision and cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me." In the same moment of time Jesus heard the cry and stood still. All the divine energies come to a halt to wait upon him who in a moment of time repents and turns to God.

Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Every doxology which opens a service in this church, every benediction which concludes it, proclaims the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. For some of you this may be the last time that He passes. Now He is within call. Now if you call to Him, He will halt and stand still, as He did for Bartimaeus in Jericho so long ago.

A moment of time! In a moment of time Satan showed Christ the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them. He had no power to bestow its glory. But in a moment of time Christ shows you the Kingdom of Heaven and all the glory of it, and says, not as a liar and deceiver like Satan, but as your Friend, and One who would be your Redeemer, "All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

"If sinners entice thee, consent thou not PROVERBS 1: 10.

III. *"It's wrong, and you're not going to do it!"*

IN an earlier Sermon from Life (see page 9) I preached on the text from Luke's Gospel, "Peter went out, and wept bitterly." The sermon was based on the expression of grief and remorse that I had heard on the lips of a woman in Philadelphia who had been tempted to sin, and now had awakened to the sadness and bitterness of it, "Oh, how could I ever have done it!"

In the sermon based upon those words, "Oh, how could I ever have done it!" I told briefly the history of this young woman who had wandered far from the path of right, and now, turning back towards the light, was amazed that she could ever have been persuaded to do what she had done. In the sermon there were three observations which I made. First of all, that retribution is no respecter of persons, and that when it strikes it makes no distinction between those who are weak and those who are depraved. Second, that under every breast there lurks

an unknown and a dangerous self. The cry of this woman, "How could I ever have done it!" was because she did not understand, or perhaps now understood too clearly and too bitterly, how all of us have an enemy within, a sinister self, a patient and relentless hunter, who waits to find the soul off its guard when it can hurl its deadly shaft.

Third, that before there is a moral breakdown, there are always preparatory stages. This woman related some of those stages to me. If she had resisted the temptation in the first instance, she might have escaped the final fall. She was amazed at what happened; yet looking back she could see plainly the footsteps she had taken. For this reason we must always be on our guard against the beginnings of evil. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me."

Such, in brief, was the message of that sermon. I concluded by saying that one of the safeguards against doing evil was to be warned by the experience of others, and that we ought to keep near to God in prayer, for prayer is always a shield which evil cannot penetrate.

The sermon ended and the service over, I watched the congregation file out with the hope and the prayer that God would use that sermon for the good

of some soul. Two days afterwards I received the following letter:

"Do you remember last Sunday night at the foot of the steps to the gallery two young girls spoke to you, and one said she enjoyed the sermon very much? That girl was I. But what I said was not what I meant. Perhaps unfortunately I am rarely tongue-tied. All I could say was, 'I enjoyed it very much'; and what I should have said was, 'Tonight Christ saved me from a horrible mistake through you!' On Tuesday I go back to college, and I had determined to do what I was afraid was wrong. So finally last night, I faced the thing squarely; and I said to myself, after the first honest thought I put on it, 'Now get this straight; it is wrong, and you're not going to do it!' Now I wouldn't do that thing at the present time for any boy in the world. I think I need say no more about that, except that I wanted you to know that at least one person was wonderfully saved from a particular sin through what you said. When I get back to school the temptation is going to be many times stronger than now; but I believe that I will not be tempted above that I am able, and that a way of escape will be provided for me."

Now you see why the preacher's office is the highest office in the world, and now you understand how it is that he is the highest paid man of any profession. Letters like these are his real reward, and a message like this enables the minister to preach with hope and with expectation. Who knows? Perhaps there will be someone here tonight who will thank God for this sermon and mark this night as a turning point in his life, as did the young woman who wrote me the letter I have just read.

I. The Presence and the Power of Temptation

This letter brings out the fact that temptation is in the world and that it is no respecter of persons. We are born upon a battlefield, and from this warfare there is no possible discharge. There is no truce, no neutrality, in this battle. It ends either in a victory for the soul or in a victory for temptation. In human nature there is that which makes a response, mysterious though it may seem, to temptation. Satan comes through the natural desires and appetites. It was when Christ had been forty days fasting in the desert and was an hungered, that the Devil came to Him, and tempting Him along the line of natural appetite, said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." To a man who had just eaten, that would be no temptation; but to a hungry man, it was a strong temptation.

Another thing about temptation, and about the temptation that confronted this young woman, is the power of temptation to persuade us to do evil for the sake of pleasing another. There are temptations and passions which sweep one off one's feet altogether; and after the first protest of conscience, all considerations of right and wrong are engulfed in the eager desire of the moment. But that is not always the case. Here was an instance where what was proposed was at once seen to be questionable and

wrong; and yet the doing of it was under favorable consideration, for the sake of pleasing another.

When the soul had been awakened, then the verdict was that now it would not do this thing for the sake of anybody in the world, or for the world itself. Then it was there came the realization of the truth of our Lord's saying, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" How strikingly and how dramatically true it is that great sayings of the Bible like that, which heretofore have been just as pieces of rhetoric to us, now burn and flash with the light of reality, transformed by experience. I can imagine the breath and feeling of relief that came over this soul which realized how near it had been to the brink of the precipice. And she was not the only one who in the providence of God has been kept back from evil and from doing evil, partly at least, for the sake of pleasing another, and who now looking back, and realizing the narrow escape, can only thank God and adore.

II. Divine Obstacles in the Way of Evil

God places obstacles in the way of the man who is taking a wrong path. No soul goes unwarned to its destruction. Yes, destruction; for no lesser word than that will do. It is the destruction of what is finest and truest in one's life. I like to read that

story of Baalam, who fooled and trifled with his conscience, and, false to its first warnings, persuaded himself that God was permitting him to go and curse Israel, and set out eagerly to go to the land of Moab, but on his way was confronted by an angel with a drawn sword. God has different ways of flashing that sword. He can do it through an independent effort of conscience—conscience aroused, apparently, without any aid or persuasion from without, for how faithful a friend conscience is. He can do it through the warning that comes to us in the lives and experiences of others who have done wrong. That sword can flash again in some familiar sentence of the Bible, or in the memory of a sainted face, or in the melody of a hymn, or in the appeal of a sermon. But however, it comes, it is God's warning. Is anyone turning today from the true path? Has anyone been inclining toward sin? If so, even already, is there not some secret misgiving? Are there not things which are of a nature to make you think twice before you go forward on the downward path—an appealing look in the eye of a friend, or the grief stamped on the face of a trusted wife or parent, or your own secret unhappiness? In spite of this, will you ride on like Baalam to your doom?

III. Decisions Alone Can Deliver

In the history with which we are dealing tonight

a final and delivering decision was made. Up to that time, although there had been doubt and troubled feeling as to the proposed course, there had been no decision not to do it; and until you decide not to do a thing your decision is to do it. I would like to sink that down deep into every mind and heart tonight. As long as you do not decide *not* to do a thing, you have decided to do it, and the soul is therefore in peril.

Conscience can be stirred in any of the ways I have just mentioned above. Fears can be aroused; spiritual longings awakened; the heart can be moved; the red signal of danger can be clearly and unmistakably discerned. But all that is not enough. There must be your own word, your own decision. *"Thou* art the man!" *"Thou* shalt say, No!" No one else can say it for you. It is not enough to say the thing is wrong. You must add to that what this young woman did, "It's wrong, *and* you're not going to do it!" And not even that is enough. You must speak not only in the future tense, but in the present tense, and say to the tempter, "I *will* not."

That was the kind of decision that delivered Joseph in the moment of his great temptation, when he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" That was the kind of decision that delivered the noble Queen of the Persians, Vashti, when she said, No, to the base invitation and

command of Ahasuerus, that she should come in and expose herself to the lascivious glances of Ahasuerus and his drunken crew of nobles. But "Vashti refused to go in," and thus she wrote her name among the stars forever and ever.

Temptation may return in greater power tomorrow than it has come today. That was what this young woman wrote, "When I get back to school the temptation is going to be many times stronger than now." But because she had made the decision, solemnly, earnestly and finally, that she would not do this evil thing, she was confident that she could resist the temptation, and thus it was that she wrote, "But I believe I will not be tempted above that I am able, and that a way of escape will be provided for me." Yes, that is the grand assurance of God and His Word. Temptation is common. Temptation will come. It is common unto all men. But if we resolve not to yield, we are conquerors; for God who is faithful will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation provide a way of escape.

Temptation is a dangerous thing. That is why Christ taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." But when temptation in the providence of God has come upon us—that is, permitted by Him—and when with the help of God we have overcome it and vanquished it, then

our lives are all the richer for that experience. The life of this young woman was undoubtedly enriched and strengthened by passing through this experience. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." No crown upon the brow of man can compare with that bright and fadeless crown which adorns the brow of him who has overcome temptation. How beautiful, how thrilling, and how stirring is that saying of Mark and Matthew with which they conclude their narrative of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, that when He had finally refused the temptation, and had said for the third time to Satan, "Get thee behind me"—"then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him"!

"We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

ROMANS 14: 10.

IV. *"I would have done it before; but I believe in an hereafter"*

I THOUGHT he had come to sell me something, or perhaps to borrow something. He was a man in the early forties, of good appearance, and well dressed. But he had come on a different errand. He wanted something that can neither be bought nor sold—Christian sympathy and help.

His business was insurance. He was the son of a Baptist clergyman, had a wife and four children in the South; but because of habits into which he had fallen, he was separated from his family. Naturally, I asked him his name. He requested to be excused from giving it, as it made no difference in the matter at hand. Things had been going badly with him. He was discouraged, downcast, and contemplating putting an end to his life. He showed me the photograph of his children. When I urged him to repent and do better for the sake of these children, he said he thought that perhaps the best thing he could do

for his family would be to put an end to his life so they could get the insurance which he carried. "I would have done this before," he said, "but I believe in an hereafter."

Then there was silence, save for the distant rumble of the traffic on the street. The hereafter! "I believe in an hereafter." I have heard many beautiful confessions of faith in the hereafter. I have read many books which affirmed it, and many sermons, too; but never has a declaration of belief in the hereafter so impressed me as did those words on the lips of that man who sat that day in my study, and who, in the midst of his difficulties, had thought to find a way out of them by putting an end to his life.

"But I believe in an hereafter," and that made all the difference in the world. Here was a powerful illustration of the restraining influence of belief in the life to come. It kept this man from self-murder. It revealed to him his duty to himself and to his family. It painted his dark horizon with the bright colors of hope.

Sometimes we are conscious of the restraining power of faith in the hereafter and act accordingly. But sometimes when we are not thinking of that influence, we are nevertheless deeply affected by it. For that reason no one can estimate the power of the belief in the life to come. It is linked by the Creator

with the deepest, strongest, and holiest things in our life.

Just what was in that man's mind when he came to me as a representative of the Church and made that declaration? Let us try to analyze and sum up what it was that was holding him and restraining him at that crisis in his life.

I. The Fear of Judgment and of Punishment

When he said, "but I believe in an hereafter," and for that reason had not put an end to his life, he meant, first of all, that he drew back from the judgments and punishments of the hereafter. His life had been marked by folly and transgression. He had sinned against the highest, against himself, against his wife, against the little children whom he had brought into the world. Nevertheless, he felt that he dare not add to the record of his transgression the sin of self-murder. It was not the fear of death itself, or of the means of procuring death, that held him back, but the thought of what came after death.

> "To die, to sleep;
> To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
> Must give us pause. . . . .
> And makes us rather bear the ills we have,
> Than fly to others that we know not of."

There was nothing unsound, or superstitious, but

altogether reasonable in this man's feeling and conclusion. There are three great convictions that we find everywhere and in every age; that what man has is a soul, that the soul is immortal, and that the soul will be judged hereafter—that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account of ourselves and receive the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil. This universal instinct is everywhere solemnly affirmed by the Bible, and especially by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose words and whose parables echo like a solemn refrain, and warn man of the Day of Judgment. No one is too ignorant, too educated, too rude, too cultivated, too good, or too bad, to be judged. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. If men thought more of that hereafter, the after-here, with its exposures and its judgments, there would be less injustice and iniquity, and much more happiness in this world. One would think that even the slightest probability of a future life would make men pause. In his dialogue between two Chinese, Voltaire makes one tell the other not to make a wrong use of his reason lest he be unhappy, not only in this life, but in the world to come. "And who told you that there is another life?" the friend asked. The other replied, "The bare uncertainty of it should make you behave as if it were an undoubted certainty."

II. The Hereafter and Duty

It was plain that the thought of the hereafter recalled to this man the injustice and wrong of his past, and of his now contemplated attitude, toward others, toward his wife, and toward the children whose father he was. They, too, were as himself, immortal souls. They, too, had an hereafter. He had done them injury enough. He saw now the false charity and philanthropy of the act he had contemplated to give them the financial benefit of an insurance policy. He saw he could give them something else, something better and something more than money, the example of a good life.

III. The Thought of the Hereafter and the Great Purpose and Destiny of Life

The thought of the hereafter brought back to this man in a way that was moving and touching the sacredness of life, its high purposes, its possible grand destiny. As I looked into his face as he said, "I believe in an hereafter," I saw something more there than just a dread or drawing back from the judgments of the life to come. I saw there the prayers of his mother, the pride of his father, his own early hopes, ambitions, and desires, and, no doubt, his own prayers. Like a beautiful mirage, all that rose now over the desert of his wasted life. What had invoked it? It was the thought of the

hereafter, that life was an eternal business. It was for something else than the abuse of self, and now death in the river, that he had been born. He was an immortal soul. His life, thus far, had been a failure. But when he thought of the hereafter, of the life to come, he realized that the present failure he had achieved must not be crowned by the supreme failure.

Thus the thought of the hereafter, bringing with it the greatness and the sacredness of life, created anew in his mind the hope that perhaps even yet he might repent, turn, overcome the habit that was ruining him, and do some worthy thing. He saw himself saving even yet something worthwhile out of the wreck of his life. The conviction he had of an hereafter was not to him a good angel to hold him back from an act of folly and sin, not merely because it warned him of punishment upon sin hereafter, but because it pointed him to what was still possible —a good life, the realization of that potential self which is born into the world with every soul, and which lies sleeping in the face of every babe until it has been marred and defiled and encrusted in the long tragedy of life. No doubt this man had learned in his childhood days those musical lines which, although we learned them in childhood, are worth remembering in the storms and trials of life:

"Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal.

Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul."

Thus belief in the hereafter is a lamp of hope that lights our path through this world. "In Thy light we shall see light." It is only in the light of this great truth that we can behold the greatness of life.

These, then, I was sure at the time—and I am sure now—were some of the thoughts which passed through the mind of this man as he sat before me and uttered those words. On the walls of my study there are many sentences, many legends written—written, of course, not with pen or pencil, or with a painter's brush, but written with the deeper lettering of the soul's expression—and here is one of them: "But I believe in an hereafter."

The hereafter! That is the greatest idea, the most valuable idea, the most restraining from sin, the most purifying and uplifting that can come into the mind of man; because, linked with it, are other great ideas which are emptied of their meaning if there be no hereafter—the soul, God, duty, redemption, prayer, and love.

For this great conviction, which is ours by instinct, and was confirmed and strengthened and brought to light by Jesus Christ, there is no possible substitute. Education is no substitute for a belief in the hereafter. Suppose that this man had said to me, "I did not end my life, because I remembered

my college diploma!" No; that was not what he said. There is nothing in education which is an anchor to the soul. Philanthropy and humanity are no substitutes for immortality, for the only thing that gives life sacredness and makes men worthy of consideration and of help is the fact that they live not only here, but in the after-here. Nor is the immortality of influence a substitute for the hereafter. The thought that my influence, whatever good may have been in it, will go on after I am gone is nothing as a motive of conduct compared with the conviction that I myself will go on.

Let the hereafter come into your mind! Is anyone on the way to sin or folly, or now in the midst of it? Then remember that you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Is anyone living just as a creature, an animal, for the things of this world, like Bunyan's man with the muck rake, never seeing the angel and the crown? Then think of the hereafter, the greatness and the sacredness of life, and lift up your eyes. Is anyone discouraged or disheartened? Then think of the hereafter, and know that there is hope. Is anyone wrong in his attitude towards others, perhaps some who are nearest to him? Then I say to you, Look! On those friends of yours I see two shadows: one is the shadow of death; but there, too, is the shadow of immortal life.

They shall live forever! You are dealing with immortal souls!

Has anyone left Christ out of his life, Christ who loved you, Christ who seeks you, Christ who died for you? Then think of the hereafter. You will stand before Him in the day of judgment. In that day will He own and acknowledge you as His friend and believer? Or will He say, "I never knew you"?

"And lose his own soul."
MARK 8: 36.

V. *"I believe his soul is lost"*

HE said it sadly, yet calmly and deliberately. A man of education, refinement, and Christian faith, who came frequently to our services, he had called to tell me of the death of his only brother. For years this brother had been a prodigal. The appeals of his friends, the entreaties of relatives, his failing in business and worldly prospects—all had been of no avail to win him back from a fatal infatuation. Memories, hopes, family—all had been sacrificed to self-indulgence and the delight of illicit relationships. Now the end had come, as it usually comes. He had died in a brothel, forsaken and dishonored. The patient brother did all that a brother could do, yet with the sorrowful realization that that little was nothing at all. No final decencies and no Christian obsequies could lift the dark shadow that had fallen across his brother's life. Trained to believe and receive the Gospel, he could entertain no hope for his brother's soul. He would eagerly grasp

at any fact or memory or dying expression which would serve as a raft for his hope. But such there was not. Judged by the light of conduct and by the light of revelation, his brother's soul was lost. "I am afraid my brother's soul is lost."

As he uttered those words, I sat in dumb silence; and the room where we were was still, save for the distant rumble of the traffic on the street. Lost! His brother's soul lost! Could it be possible that he could contemplate such an ending? Lost! Forever banished from the presence of God, and from the life of joy and hope! The mind staggered as it tried to contemplate it. Every ordinary thing, every ordinary sight and object in the room, the usual interest of the day seemed to melt and shrivel away to nothingness before that dread idea—a soul lost! It was one thing to discuss it as a possibility for an unnamed or imaginary soul, to state the scriptural teachings on the subject, to pronounce in the service or in the sacraments words which assumed such a contingency; but now to hear a man actually say that he thought his brother's soul was lost—that seemed too heavy for the mind to bear.

Yet this man was only taking seriously what he had heard me and other ministers say. He had taken seriously what the great sacraments of the Church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, assume and signify; that is, the way in which a soul is saved, and there-

fore the possibility of a soul's being lost. Yes, he had taken seriously the words of Jesus—that it was no mere rhetoric, when He said, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

That never forgotten sentence pronounced in my study that day by that man concerning his brother brings to mind three great facts: first, that man is and has a living soul; second, that the soul can be stained, defiled, wronged, sinned against, and lost; and third, what Christ has done to save the soul.

I. You Are a Living Soul

I have in my library a valuable book called *The Creeds of Christendom,* a collection of the creedal statements and confessions of all branches of the Christian Church since the creed of Ignatius of Antioch, A.D. 107. In none of these creeds do I find any definition of, or statement as to, the soul. At first, that might strike one as a very strange thing. But, on the other hand, every creed ever written or confessed is a monument to the fact of the human soul. There may be no definition of the soul in these creeds, but they all commence with an affirmation of the soul—as in the Apostle's Creed, "I believe"; or "we declare." The soul makes possible the creed. Only a soul could ever conceive of or desire a confession of faith.

In the autobiography of the famous backwoods preacher, the man whom Lincoln defeated for Congress, Peter Cartwright, there is an interesting account of a visit to a wealthy physician in the Cumberland district of Western Tennessee. Cartwright, during some special meetings, was entertained at this physician's home. The doctor was a good-living man, was just in his dealings with his slaves, and even supported the church. Yet he was an avowed atheist. He said to Cartwright, that he could prove that there was no such thing as experimental religion, which meant, of course, that he could prove that there was no such thing as a soul. His method was as follows:

"Did you ever see religion?"

"No."

"Did you ever hear religion?"

"No."

"Did you ever smell religion?"

"No."

"Did you ever taste religion?"

"No."

"Did you ever feel religion?"

"Yes."

"Now, then," said the doctor, "I have proved beyond a doubt by four respectable witnesses that religion is not seen, heard, smelled or tasted; and but one lone solitary witness, namely, feeling, has

testified that it is an experimental fact. The weight of evidence is overpowering, sir, and you must give it up."

At first astonished and perplexed, Cartwright soon recovered himself. Referring to the doctor's profession, he told him that in pretending to cure diseases and relieve pain he was playing the hypocrite and practicing fraud on the people. Astonished at this, the doctor asked what he meant. Whereupon Cartwright said,

"Did you ever see a pain?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever hear a pain?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever smell a pain?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever taste a pain?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever feel a pain?"

"Certainly I did, sir."

Turning the doctor's own argument against him, Cartwright said, "Do not be alarmed, doctor, four respectable witnesses have testified that there is no such thing as pain in the human system, and but one lone witness has deposed that there is."

The debate ended in a prayer meeting, and the conversion of the doctor, who manumitted his slaves and sent them back to Liberia, and himself was

licensed to preach the Gospel of the salvation of the soul through the sacrifice of Christ upon Calvary.

Definitions help but little when we come to think of the soul. The soul is felt rather than defined. The Bible never defines the soul, just as it never defines God; it assumes both. So it was with Christ. He never gave any definition of the soul, but He lived and spake as if the soul were the one thing of great value. The Bible ever makes it plain that the soul, though united for a time to the body, is nevertheless, distinct from it. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." [1] "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." [2] This the Bible teaches—that there is a body and a soul.

Back of you and me, and our appearances and our habits and our wishes and labors, lie our souls, invisible, immaterial, but the realest part of you and me. Man is more than phosphorus and silica and lime and water, more than bone and flesh and cell and muscle and appetite and clothes and habits. He is a living soul!

When we express the deepest that is in us, it is our souls and not our bodies that we express. The

[1] Ecclesiastes 12: 7.
[2] Matthew 10: 28.

body is but a medium partially expressing the soul and its emotions. The brothers of Joseph confessed, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear." It was not the body of Joseph that was in anguish, but his soul. When Hannah prayed before the altar in Shiloh, it was not her body that prayed, but her soul that she poured out before the Lord. It was not the handsome body of Jonathan that was knit to David, but the soul of Jonathan. It was Job's soul and not his body that suffered most, for he said, "How long will ye vex my soul?" It is the soul in us that calls upon God. "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. My soul thirsteth for the living God." It was Christ's soul that agonized in Gethsemane; the bloody sweat of the body but told of the deep agony and sweat of the soul.

Your soul is the part of you which hopes and yearns, and believes or disbelieves, loves and hates, suffers, agonizes, struggles, is tempted, falls, triumphs, sees the invisible and hears the inaudible; that weeps and curses, that aspires and sins. All that I am, all that I feel, all that I hope, all within me that believes and prays and suffers—that is my soul. It is capable of the deepest misery and the deepest joy. It can go to hell, and it can go to heaven.

Then there is the standard of the design of life.

The whole scheme of life is planned for the good of our souls. All the experiences and changes through which we pass in life are designed, as revelation, confirmed as experience, shows us, for the exercise and the expansion of moral qualities. This great and marvelous universe and all that we meet in it—this long probation of life with sunshine and dark, with thorn and crown, with gain and loss, with pain and sorrow—is to the end that God may prove us and see what is in our souls. If we shall keep his commandments, it is to discover if we shall learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.

A third standard is that of endurance. The body passes, for it is temporal; the soul abides forever.

"A thousand empires rise,
A thousand empires fall.
And still the eternal stars
Shine over all.

At last the shining stars
Into the night are thrust.
And suns and systems pale
Go down to dust.

But let the universe
Back into darkness roll—
Two lights death cannot dim,
God and the soul." [3]

[3] Author unknown.

These are the facts about the soul which make the question flung out by Christ so many centuries ago, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" or "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" impossible of an answer. One of the poets in a delightful flight of imagination has pictured a spirit shut out from Paradise searching through the creation to discover an object, an act, a thought, or an emotion which might open unto it the gates to Paradise; and the thing which finally accomplished that was the tear of penitence on the cheek of a wicked man. That tear and what it stood for was the most precious and the most potent. But no poet has ever attempted, even in the most unrestrained flight of imagination, to describe a man who has given his soul away making a successful quest after something which would represent the equivalent of the soul and could be offered as a fair exchange. That is beyond all human reason or imagniation. It is something, as we shall see, which could have been discovered only by the wisdom and the love of God.

II. The Soul Can Be Lost

It was to that solemn fact that my visitor bore witness when he said, "I believe his soul is lost." That is the sadness which rests like a cloud over the creation, and breathes its melancholy music in all the

expressions of human life and of human history—the fact that the world is filled with immortal souls, designed by their Creator for a life of power and glory, but now soiled and stained and corrupted.

Sometimes the soul can be lost through a single dark transgression. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean that any single sin, even the most heinous, in and of itself seals the fate of the soul. What I mean is that it may and often does start the soul on the downward course which results in its final banishment from the presence of its Creator. In the Great Day, when no matter how lightly or carelessly it has been dismissed in this life, the question of Christ, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" has survived all other questions, and becomes the one absorbing question, there will be multitudes who will look back to one single dark act, an act of sin of which they never repented, an act of sin which opened the door to other transgressions; and they will say of that one sin, "That was the sin that lost me my soul."

Why do we speak so much about temptation? Only because of the dread possibilities of a single sinful act. What may come of it? It may strike you as an exaggeration, at first, but if the soul of man was worth the sacrifice of Calvary, then there is no exaggeration in what Cardinal Newman once said: "It were better for the sun and moon to drop from

heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions who are upon it to die of starvation in extremest agony, so far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul—I will not say should be lost—but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one willful untruth, though it harm no one, or steal one poor farthing without excuse."

The literature of almost every people seems to contain the legend, or fable, of how a man once made a pact with the devil. The agreement was that the devil was to give the man his every conceivable temporal desire and pleasure and get in return and upon demand the man's soul. Then the legend pictures the Paradise of delight in which the man lived for a time, and then the coming of the dreadful day when the devil demanded his pay.

The soul can be lost again through repeated indulgence in sin. This is true of sensual sin. What a man he might have been, physically, mentally, spiritually, I used to think, when I saw him on the streets of the city where I served first as a minister, if only he had followed in the footsteps of his godly mother. But there he was, tall, gaunt, haggard, the mind and body robbed of their native power and strength, and hardly anything left to suggest that here was a soul once made in the image of God. Repeated indulgence in transgression had reduced him to that terrible condition. Thomas More some-

where has a line about dissolving the pearl of the soul in the wine of desire. It is a powerful and true figure. It would take a long time to dissolve a pearl in any liquid. It takes a long time to dissolve the soul. Indeed, utterly to dissolve it and destroy it is impossible. But it is possible to dissolve in it the element of righteousness and of happiness. As I stood this summer amid the ruins of Ephesus, there came back to me, as I thought of the glory and grandeur and wickedness of that once great city, those words of John, where in the Apocalypse, after describing the business and trade and commerce of the earthly Babylon, how men sold there horses, and chariots, and silver, and gold, and fine linen, and precious wood, he adds, "and souls of men." Alas, the traffic still goes on. As soon as a soul comes into the world, its enemies surround it and seek to destroy it and separate it from God. What Christ said to Peter we may all take to heart. "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

Then there are those enemies within the gate, those inner and invisible assassins which seek to destroy the soul within us—ambition, pride, envy, jealousy, and worst of all, hate. What ghastly caricatures they make of God's original creation!

The soul can be lost also through repeated rejection of the offer of mercy and salvation in Christ. In a sense, without doing anything at all, we are all

lost souls and under condemnation. But to all the mercy of God is offered. Some people say that their Gospel is the Gospel of the Sermon on the Mount, meaning that they can get along with what are called the ethical teachings of Jesus without any plan of redemption at all. I wonder if they have ever stopped to consider the words with which that sermon comes to a close, "Great was the fall of it." The fall of what? Not a mere house, not a mere human body either, but the fall of a soul. As another Gospel puts it, "The ruin of that house was great."

III. What God Has Done to Save the Soul

If it would require the pen of an angel and the tongue of a seraph to describe the incomparable worth of a soul, how then can we expect to describe what God has done to save the soul? About all that we can do is to fall down in wonder and awe before the Cross which is the eternal pledge and sign of what God has done in Christ to save the soul from sin. "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the power of God." No, God is not willing that any soul should perish; and *how* unwilling He is, that we can measure only by the death of Christ, His only begotten Son, upon the Cross. God is not willing that your soul should perish. Are you?

"No trouble is too great to take for a human soul." So once said a man whom I had commended

for the interest he was taking in the salvation of a brother for whom Christ died. No; no trouble is too great to take for a human soul. I remember what a former distinguished president of one of our American universities once said about the preacher through whom he had come to believe in Christ as his Saviour. He expressed his everlasting gratitude that that humble preacher on this dark winter night had thought it worth his while to travel a long distance through the mud and the night to preach the Gospel of salvation to a few people gathered together in the country church. The greatest opportunity that comes to us in life is to do something good for an immortal soul. He that winneth souls is wise. He that winneth fame, the honors of this world, finds at length that they fade into nothingness. He that winneth wealth heaps up riches and knoweth not who shall gather them. But he that winneth souls and saveth a soul from death, that man is wise.

How does it stand with your soul? Perhaps no relative, no friend, no companion, no minister, may ever say that to you in person. It may be that if they did it would be resented. But this is the advantage and the opportunity, on both sides, of the service in the church. Here it can be said in all propriety and in all earnestness, said so you will not forget it—How does it stand with your soul? A godless sailor

once went to a play in Edinburgh. The last act closed with a man about to be hanged proposing with a glass in his hand the following toast: "Here's to the prosperity of the British nation, and the salvation of my immortal soul." Then the curtain fell. But another drama had commenced in the life of the man who had witnessed the play. "My immortal soul"—and not until his soul had found the peace in Christ through repentance and faith, and he could say, "It is well with my soul," did that drama come to an end. It is not in a play tonight, but in the most sacred of all places, in the place appointed of God for the refuge and salvation of souls, that the question is put to you tonight, or to you who read this sermon, "Is it well with thy soul?"

"How long wilt thou be drunken?"
I SAMUEL 1: 14.

VI. *"And wrote things for which I must now apologize"*

HE was a young man who had planned to unite with the Church, and the arrangements had been made for him to make a confession of faith at the next Communion. At a morning service before the Communion Sunday, he came forward and greeted me. I shook hands with him, and then turned quickly to speak with one whom I had seen at the services and with whom I had been trying to get in touch for some time. That week I received from this young man who had planned to come into the church an angry, bitter, and abusive letter. For some unaccountable reason he felt that he had been abruptly dealt with when I spoke with him in the church. Now he announced his intention to withdraw from the proposed step of uniting with the church, and expressed his sentiments regarding the church and the minister in no uncertain terms.

It was the sort of letter that would naturally provoke one to answer in kind; but on the biblical prin-

ciple that "a soft answer turneth away wrath," I wrote him that kind of answer, assuring him that he was totally mistaken and that he had misinterpreted an altogether natural and innocent act. I told him he still would be welcome at the church and that whether he united with this church or not, I hoped he would make a confession of faith in some church and grow in the Christian life and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

A considerable period of time passed and the matter dropped out of my mind altogether. Then one day I received this letter:

"Reverend Sir:

"I have before me two papers. On my right is one bearing a poem entitled 'Not Understood' and on my left a copy of my letter of February 4 to you. After reading this poem several times I felt impelled to take the copy of my letter to you and to read it carefully. After doing so I have come to the realization that I have not only done you an injustice but have also made myself a party to something which I despise in others and which I always attempt to refrain from doing. Perhaps I can best explain by quoting the fifth stanza of this poem:

> 'Not understood. How trifles often change us!
> The thoughtless sentence or the fancied slight
> Destroys long years of friendship, and estrange us,
> And on our souls there falls a freezing blight—
> Not understood.' [1]

"Perhaps this poem would not rank very high in a consideration of poetry, but the ideas which it contains make it very

[1] Thomas Bracken.

worthwhile. 'How trifles often change us!' I doubt if there is anyone more vociferous than myself in denouncing those who always jump at trifles such as 'the thoughtless sentence or the fancied slight.' Yet that is the very thing which I have done. I took offense at the 'fancied slight' and wrote things for which I must now apologize if I am to retain my self-respect. I assure you that it is not an easy task for me to 'backwater' and apologize. I know only too well that I cannot retract what was written, but I can say I am sorry.

"Please do not mistake me to mean that I am retracting what I wrote of my own religious viewpoints. You and I will probably always differ in opinion with regard to many matters. A difference of opinion, however, is one thing, while an accusation of intentional discourtesy is quite another.

"Please accept my extreme regret and sorrow that I made it necessary for this letter of apology to be written.

"Yours in Christ,

....."

The first and obvious comment that one would make upon this experience and this letter is that it was a courageous and manly thing for this man to write the apology which he did. It was hard for him to do so. "I assure you," he wrote, "that it is not an easy task for me to backwater and apologize." Yet he wrote the fine letter which I have just read to you. None of us finds it easy to retract and apologize, even when we know that we have been in the wrong. When we conquer our pride and anger and make the honorable amend, it is an evidence, not only of genuine manhood, but of the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Our Lord once told the parable of the two sons who were asked by their father to go into the vineyard and work. One said "I will." "But he went not." The other abruptly and angrily replied, "I will not." "But afterwards he repented and went." He thought better of his rude refusal. As he sat drinking at the inn, perhaps, he remembered all that his father had done for him, and, unhappy, he left the inn and started for home. When he reaches the vineyard he looks over the wall and sees his aged father there, bending to a task which is beyond him. Cut to the heart, he leaps over the wall, takes the hoe or the mattock from his father's hands, and begins to work in the vineyard. He had vowed that he would not, but when he saw that he had made a mistake and done wrong, he had the courage to confess it, and had the wisdom not to stick to a foolish and unjust statement and opinion. "He repented and went."

How much more happiness there would be in the world today if all who have resolved the wrong thing, hoisted the wrong colors, said the wrong word, would have the sense and grace to do what the son in this parable did, when "he repented and went." How many hearts are embittered, homes saddened, and churches divided, because in a moment of anger and impulse, or fancied hurt or insult, one has let out an angry "I will not." In a time almost as brief,

perhaps, as that in which the son of this parable discovered his mistake, the course upon which the man has started is discovered to be wrong, foolish, lamentable; and secret regret and remorse may inflict their pangs. Yet because he has said the thing, because he has put himself on record, because he has started in that direction, he sticks to it. Thus hearts are made lonely, friendships are severed, and life is embittered. If tonight I speak to anyone who has taken a wrong attitude towards his fellow man, or has set out on a course which manifestly is mistaken, unfortunate, and wrong, then in the name of your temporal happiness and in the name of your eternal interests and happiness, let me entreat you to have the wisdom and grace of that son, who, when he saw his mistake, had the grace and the courage to repent. "He repented and went."

The second comment that I wish to make on this letter and this experience is that it is very easy to misunderstand and misinterpret a word or an action and so do injustice to another. The classic instance of that is the history of the mother of Samuel, Hannah. The services in the holy house of Shiloh were over, and the congregation, all but one, Hannah, had gone out. Sad with disappointment because she had not been able to bear a son, and stung by the reproaches and taunts of the prolific second wife in the home, Hannah came with her burden to the house

of God. Earnestly she prayed there in silence that God would grant her a child, and vowed that if He did, she would devote the child to the service of God.

In the bitterness of her spirit and in the fervor of her prayer Hannah uttered no audible word. The old priest, Eli, saw this solitary worshiper in the Tabernacle; and observing that her lips were moving, and yet no sound came from them, he rashly concluded that the woman was drunk and called out severely, "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine." Then the misunderstood Hannah replied, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." When Eli realized the mistake he had made, he spoke kindly to Hannah and said, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition."

The old priest had made a bad mistake. Religious earnestness had been mistaken for drunkenness, the fine frenzy of the soul for the intoxication of wine, and a praying woman for a drunken harlot. It was a cruel mistake, and yet the kind of mistake that is frequently made all about us in the world today. The blunder of Eli teaches us to be careful and reserved in the judgments which we pass upon one another.

In a poem called "The Naming of Places," Wordsworth relates how one day he and his sister and

Coleridge were wandering along the eastern shore of Grassmere Lake. The reapers, men, women, boys, and girls, were at work in the fields. But on a point of jutting land they saw a man, tall and upright in figure, fishing beside the margin of the lake. They exclaimed to one another how reckless and improvident this man must be, fooling away his time fishing when others were hard at work in the fields. The fisherman turned at the sound of their voices; and they saw at once that he was aged, frail, and ill, unfitted for labor in the field, and doing the best he could to gain a pittance from the lake. At once their reproach of the man changed to self-reproach:

> "Nor did we fail to see within ourselves
> What need there is to be reserved in speech,
> And temper all our thoughts with Charity."

In order that they might not forget the lesson of the day, they named the point of land where they had seen and misjudged the frail old man, "Point Rash Judgment." It is a point of land where too many of us in life frequently stand and pass our foolish, ignorant, hasty, and sometimes cruel, judgment upon others.

In his diary a lieutenant colonel of a Northern regiment relates this incident which took place near Berryville, Virginia, during the Civil War. In the gathering darkness, while the battle was still raging,

the colonel saw three men going towards the rear and leaving the battle, two of them supporting the compainon that limped between them. This was a favorite dodge of cowards to pretend that they were carrying a wounded comrade to the rear, and so escape the perils of the battle field. Convinced that this was another case of pretended injury and wounds, the angry colonel stopped the three men and ordered them to go back to the firing line. The man who was being helped protested that he was wounded, and badly wounded. But the angry colonel said to him, "You are not wounded; you are trying to sneak out of the fight in the dark. Go back to your regiment."

The wounded soldier then said, "Give me your hand, Colonel." Not knowing just what he meant, the colonel put out his hand, whereupon the man took it and thrust it into a hole in his shoulder while the warm blood spurted up the arm of the skeptical officer. Shocked and overcome, the colonel exclaimed, "You poor fellow! You poor fellow! Forgive me; go back to the doctor, quick." The man took a step forward and fell dead. He had given his life for his country; but in the moment of supreme sacrifice he had been mistaken for a coward and a deserter.

The Christian man beyond all others is bound to practice charity and patience with all men. In the

great hymn on Christian love, Paul nobly describes love as that which "thinketh no evil." That is the standard we ought to set for ourselves. If we make any mistake in our judgment and opinions of others, let the mistake be on the side of a too high estimate of their goodness and kindness and integrity, rather than on the other side. Human life is a mysterious thing, and so are the motives which move us and impel us. How little, after all, we know of one another. If we could look beneath the veil that hides one spirit from another, I am sure that our judgments would be kinder and more just.

"If we knew the cares and trials,
Knew the efforts all in vain,
And the bitter disappointment,
Understood the loss and gain—
Would the grim eternal roughness
Seem—I wonder—just the same?
Should we help where now we hinder?
Should we pity where we blame?

"Ah! we judge each other harshly,
Knowing not life's hidden force;
Knowing not the fount of action
Is less turbid at its source;
Seeing not amid the evil
All the golden grains of good;
And we'd love each other better
If we only understood.

"Could we judge all deeds by motives
That surround each other's lives,

See the naked heart and spirit,
  Know what spur the action gives,
Often we should find it better,
  Purer than we judge we should;
We should love each other better
  If we only understood.

"Could we judge all deeds by motives,
  See the good and bad within,
Often we should love the sinner
  All the while we loathe the sin.
Could we know the powers working
  To o'erthrow integrity,
We should judge each other's errors
  With more patient charity." [3]

Is there anyone with whom you have had a misunderstanding, or whom you know you have judged rashly and falsely, and toward whom you have acted and spoken accordingly? Then, while it is possible, do the honorable and Christian thing, and speak tonight the words of apology and retraction. Do this for the peace and happiness of the one whom you have misjudged, and for your own peace and happiness. Here is an incident from the Battle of Bull Run:

In a log cabin in the woods General Bee lies dying. His only words are "Find Imboden! Find Imboden!" Imboden had blamed his superior officer, Bee, and cursed him bitterly for leaving him and his

[3] Author unknown.

battery unsupported. The dying Bee had learned of this and wished to tell Imboden with his own lips that he had given orders for his release. All through the night the men were scouring the fields and the woods, riding up and down the country roads, searching for Imboden. At length they found him and brought him to the cabin where Bee was dying. Full of regret now, and remorse, too, that he had so mistaken the action of his superior officer, Imboden took Bee by the hand and called him by name. No curses now; but softly, fondly, filially. But none answered! Too late now, dying Bee, to make your explanation! Too late now, fierce looking Imboden, hereafter much to be heard of in this war between the brothers, to take back your reckless and mistaken curses.

Therefore, while it is called today, do what ought to be done, and make the repentance and the retraction that are proper. Do not wait until death makes it impossible.

Above all, do not wait too long in repenting—and how much we all need repentance—in repenting of your mistakes and your sins against the love of God our Father," Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

"Deceive not with thy lips."
PROVERBS 24: 28.

VII. *A babe, a mother, and a hospital — "What is truth?"*

THERE are some decisions that a minister is called upon to make when he could wish that he had the wisdom of Solomon; and there are times when he is asked to give advice and make a decision, and the advice must be given and the decision made immediately. It was so in this case.

A young wife had given birth to a child in the hospital. The child expired almost as soon as it was born. "No sooner born than blasted." A previous experience and disappointment had left the mother in a very serious physical and mental state. Her physician had warned her and warned her husband that a repetition of that experience might prove fatal to her. The husband and friends were, therefore, filled with alarm at the possible consequences of this second disappointment. It so happened that at the same time there had been born in the hospital an unwanted babe, or a babe whose mother had died, I

am not sure now which. It was suggested to the husband that this child be substituted for the child who had died. The mother would not be told of the substitution that had been made and would never know that the child was not her own; and the child, as it grew up, would never know that the mother was not its real mother.

The proposal seemed to have some virtue in it, and yet was so extraordinary that the husband hesitated for a little before making the decision. A physician in a distant city was consulted and seemed to favor the proposal. There were friends, too, that thought that in view of the possible crisis in the life of the mother it would be a wise thing to do. But for some reason, before making the final decision, the husband began to ask himself how such a procedure would stand in the light of Christianity, in the light of the Bible as a teacher. He was a stranger in the city, and went to a member of this church, a business friend, who brought him to me.

The time was short. If the proposal was to be carried out, it had to be carried out at once. If the minister, the representative of the Church, of Christian truth, had given his approval, it was evident that the plan would be put into execution. It was not a responsibility that anyone would wish to carry. However, when the matter was stated and the situation explained, there seemed to be no doubt at all in

my mind what was the right advice to give and the right course for the distracted husband to follow. I told him that I did not believe that such a course was countenanced by the Bible and Christian truth. I sympathized with him in his deep anxiety concerning the welfare of his wife, and the possible disastrous effects that the death of her child would have upon her well being. But I reminded him that neither he nor his wife, nor the attending physicians or nurses were responsible for what had happened. It was an "act of God," and as such should be acquiesced in by the father and the mother. Then I pointed out to him the very likely disastrous effect the discovery of the fraud and deceit by the mother would have upon their own relationship and happiness. Although it seemed easy at first thought to carry out the plan and hide the real identity of the child, the odds were all against it. It was practically certain that the mother would discover the deceit that had been practiced upon her; and whether at a time he thought proper he himself informed her, or she learned it, as undoubtedly she would learn it, in some other way, the result would be disastrous to their relationship. He would have been found guilty of deceiving his wife, and deceiving her in the highest and most sacred relationship of life and in the fondest hope of life. The fact that he had practiced the deception out of concern for his wife's welfare,

and with the good motive of preserving her health of mind and body, would make little difference when the hoax was discovered. How could his wife trust him again? and how could he explain what he had done?

I, therefore, gave my word against the proposal. He thanked me and went away. I had told him, too, that he ought to put confidence in the ability of his wife to meet the shock and disappointment, and that both would be given strength for their ordeal. When I conducted the funeral of the child I met the husband, who told me that they had decided not to carry out the proposed plan, that his wife had been told that the child had died and had taken it with fortitude and resignation. He thanked me for the counsel I had given, and quite evidently felt that he had been saved from a serious mistake.

What is truth? This somewhat dramatic incident raises that question. Under all circumstances and at all times must the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, be told? The incident which suggested this sermon was a clear case where one was tempted to tell an untruth and to deceive through what seemed to be a worthy motive. In this case the motive was the well being of the mother of the child who had died. We all grant that there is a difference in lies that are told. Most lies are told to protect oneself from punishment, or the scorn of

men, or to further one's interests in this world—for certainly no lie, white or otherwise, ever furthered one's interest in the world which is to come; that would be unthinkable—or, worst of all, to injure a fellow being. There is, we all grant, a great difference between the selfish, despicable lie and deceit, and that which is spoken or acted for a different reason. A man, to protect another from the pursuit of his enemies, to save his life, may say when he is interrogated that he has not seen the fugitive, or may say that he passed north instead of south, and thus throw his pursuers on the wrong track. A physician, conceivably, may tell a patient that he is doing well and is improved in health, when the very opposite is the real state of affairs. Yet, for enlisting the help of the man's own spirit in the fight for recovery, the physician, I suppose, has often told that sort of an untruth.

Still, when all has been granted along this line, if we look at human conduct in the light of God's Word, we are conscious of a feeling of doubt, and always of discomfort, when we attempt to condone or approve any kind of falsehood. What the world suffers from in all its relationships, political and international, business and social, and as between man and man, is the vast amount of falsehood there is in life. That, I suppose, is the reason so much is said

on this subject in the Bible, both in the New Testament and in the Old.

An incident comes back to me out of my young manhood which illustrates how good men are tempted to lie, and to do it in a way that does not altogether commit them on the record. The man whom I have in mind was a rancher in Colorado. He was a godly man, and a good and kind man, a man who had family prayers with his "help" on the ranch every morning. At the end of the season, which had been a very bad one for him, I drove with him with a colossal load of alfalfa hay to a nearby town. The hay was what was called "third cutting," and, therefore, inferior. When the bales were being hoisted into the barn, the purchaser pulled out a few wisps, and examining it exclaimed, "This is not first cutting, as I had given instruction." The rancher looked at him with a look of injured integrity and exclaimed, "That is what you ordered, isn't it?" conveying the impression that as an honorable man he would deliver to the purchaser only the hay which he had ordered, which was first cutting. I can recall the deep silence after the man thus spoke, for all three knew that it was a falsehood. That night, as we stood on the road, the man paid me off before I started East to return to college. His conscience evidently troubled him, for as he handed me the gold pieces that meant so much to him, and yet for which

I had worked so hard, he said, calling me by the name they gave me on the ranch, "I didn't tell that man it was first cutting, did I?" Literally, of course, he had not; actually, he had.

There are a lot of lies told that way. A man has enough regard for the truth, enough conscience, to keep him back from telling the out-and-out lie; so he tries to pay some sort of tribute to, make a gesture toward truth, by telling this kind of lie, a half lie, or a half articulate lie, whichever you wish to call it, which is really worse, I think, than the out-and-out lie.

In the history of Abraham when he was down in Egypt with Sarah, we have an example of a lie that is a half truth.

When he entered Egypt, Abraham was afraid Pharaoh would be taken with the beauty of his wife Sarah, and that in order to get possession of her he would take the life of Abraham. To protect himself, Abraham resorted to a cowardly lie, which in the end did not protect him but subjected him to even greater danger. He told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister. Pharaoh then loaded Abraham with presents and took Sarah into his palace. But before the marriage could be consummated, the Lord plagued Pharaoh with great plagues, and he knew that there was something wrong. When he learned how Abraham

had deceived him, he sent Sarah back to Abraham and ordered them to leave the country.

It was not a complete out-and-out falsehood that Abraham told; for Sarah, who was his wife, was also his sister, or rather half sister, the daughter of the same father, but not the same mother. It was a true statement, therefore, when he told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister. But it was also a lie in that it gave Pharaoh the impression that Sarah was not the wife of Abraham.

There is a great deal of that kind of lying—not a one hundred per cent untruth, but dissimulation and equivocation, a telling the truth, but not the whole truth, or telling the truth in a way that creates a false impression. When Doeg reported to the angry Saul that the chief priest, Ahimelech, had fed and armed David and his band, he told the truth; yet at the same time he lied about the old priest because he did not tell Saul that David had told Ahimelech that he had come on urgent business for the king. Ananias and Sapphira told the truth and acted the truth when they brought the money they had received for the sale of land and laid it at the apostles' feet. Yet at the same time they lied both to God and to man, because the inference was that the money they laid at the apostle's feet was all that they had received for the sale of the land; whereas, in fact, it was only a portion of it. In some respects this eva-

sive half-lying is worse than the out and out lie. When he was stationed at Fort Pierce in Florida in 1841, Sherman wrote thus to a friend who had told him that he had "insinuated" something in his letters: "If you have any regard for my feelings don't say the word 'insinuation' again. You may abuse me as much as you please; but I'd prefer of the two to be accused of telling a direct falsehood instead of saying anything evasively or underhand; and if I've ever been guilty of such a thing, it was unintentional."

It is a poor policy to indulge in any kind of lying. Even the so-called "white lie" is dangerous because, as one has put it, "they who tell white lies sooner or later become color blind." Deception generally fails of its end. Abraham lied, and got into more trouble because of his lying. A lie is like a cripple; it needs a crutch to lean on. One lie requires another to cover it up, and then a third to cover up the second. That is how it was with Peter when he denied his Lord. Having denied Him once, he had to protect himself with another lie, and then with still another.

Is it ever right to lie? Is it ever permissible to lie? Some take the view that an occasion may arise where the duty of truthfulness conflicts with a moral obligation. For example, as when one might tell a mother, who herself was dangerously ill, when she inquired for a sick child, that the child was better,

although the child was dead. There, in order to protect the mother's health, one tells a falsehood.

But there are those who take a still higher ground and hold that it is never permissible for a Christian to state what is false, even to save a life. The classic example of that is Jeanie Deanes in *The Heart of Midlothian.* Effie Deanes was on trial for her life, charged with the murder of her infant. The sister Jeanie was put on the stand. A single word, "No," in answer to the question of the attorney for the defense would have saved the life of her sister. But Jeanie Deanes would not lie. She said "Yes," and her sister was condemned to death. It was not for lack of love for her sister that Jeanie Deanes refused to lie; for after her sister had been sentenced to be hanged, Jeanie walked all the way to London on bare feet to petition the king for a pardon, which was granted. Jeanie Deanes is said to have had a counterpart in real life, a woman named Helen Walker, to whose memory Scott erected a monument with this inscription: "This stone was erected by the author of Waverly to the memory of Helen Walker, who died in the year of God, 1791. This humble individual practiced in real life the virtues with which fiction has invested the imaginary character of Jeanie Deanes, refusing the slightest departure from veracity, even to save the life of a sister."

"Deceive not with thy lips." That is the best

policy. The best way to go through life is to follow the torch of truth. That torch may lead you into difficult and dangerous places, but never into a wrong place; and when you follow the torch of truth, you will find yourself in the company of the great and noble souls who followed Christ, who is the Truth.

There is one form of lying about which we do not often speak or think, and which is rarely mentioned in discussions of this subject, and that is lying to ourselves. Yet falsehood to ourselves is the source of falsehood to others.

"To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

When you lie to another, whatever the purpose of the lie, you run at least some risk of detection. But when you lie to yourself, you are the only one who will know it, and sometimes you deceive even yourself. When you pass false estimates on your own character, when you give false excuses for your conduct when it is wrong, you lie to yourself, and therefore injure the most valuable thing in the universe, your own soul.

What is the source of unbelief in Jesus Christ? John declares it is self-deception, for he says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,

and the truth is not in us." The attitude of a great host towards Jesus Christ is that of rejection and unbelief because they do not feel the need of Him; for if men felt the need of Christ, and saw themselves as sinners, they would believe in Him. But they deceive themselves by telling themselves that they have no sin, or that they are as good as the average run of mankind, and therefore need no Saviour. This is a sad self-deception, and, if persisted in, is fatal. Deceive not your fellow man; lie not to yourself; but above all, lie not to God. The Cross of Christ is the eternal proclamation of our sin and of our need of eternal life and forgiveness in His Name. Therefore, come to Christ! Confess your sin! For we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God! Seek the divine forgiveness! The ancient promise, sealed with Christ's blood, is still beautiful and is still true—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"I will remember their sin no more."
JEREMIAH 31: 34.
"Forgetting those things which are behind." PHILIPPIANS 3: 13.

VIII. *"I would like to help the church, but I don't dare to"*

HE was a prosperous building contractor whom I had never seen in my church. His sister was a faithful member, and through her he made frequent and generous contributions to the work of the church. This I regarded as a desire to please his sister, rather than any personal interest in the church. When my ministry in that city was coming to a close, I was therefore surprised when this man called to see me and expressed his appreciation of the ministry of the church and the message which had been proclaimed. He said, "I suppose you wondered why I never came to church. It was not because I do not believe in the church or the Gospel, for I do. I would like to take an active part in the work of the church as one of its members, but I don't dare to." Then he went on to relate a sad and unfortunate incident in his life. Should he now come forward and make a public profession of his faith and engage in the work of

the church, he felt that accusation would be brought against him, and that the unfortunate incident and transgression of the past would be dragged into the light, to his own distress, to the distress of others, and to the injury of the church.

This man was a representative of a class, more numerous perhaps than we imagine, who feel themselves debarred from Christian witness and Christian activity because of some transgression of yesterday. They are haunted and hampered and hindered by the past. They would like to speak and to serve, but do not dare to. Thus the past exercises its tyranny over the present and the future. I have no desire to open old wounds or invoke the ghosts of yesterday. Yet, the visit of that man, and what he said to me, brings up a real problem in the lives of many people. One has said that our two great enemies are yesterday and tomorrow, meaning regret over the past and anxiety for the future. But the greater enemy by far is yesterday, with its failures, its mistakes, and its sins. Much is going to depend upon the right or wrong use of the past, whether a man's past rules and dominates him, or whether the man rules and dominates his past.

Here was a man who, so far as his Christian confession and testimony were concerned, was ruled by his past. He feared that if he came out into the open and spoke for Christ, the dead hand of the past

would be stretched out and placed with restraining and accusing power upon his shoulder. Thus the past has great power to hurt and bind and forbid in the present. Carlyle has a striking illustration of this in *Past and Present,* where he tells of a knight, Henry of Essex, who was engaged in a desperate encounter with another knight on an island in the Thames. Years before, Henry had done cruel wrong to another knight, Sir Gilbert, wearing out his life with chains and imprisonment. He had also profaned a shrine of St. Edmund. Now, in the midst of his battle, Henry glanced to one side for a moment, and lo, at the rim of the horizon he descerned another armed knight of gigantic stature. It was the wronged Gilbert with St. Edmund at his side. With that Henry's sword fell from his hand, and he was soon vanquished. "Thus does conscience project itself across whatsoever knowledge or imagination, understanding, or natural disposition a man has in him; and like the light through colored glass paints strange pictures on the rim of the horizon. Justice and reverence are the everlasting laws of this universe, and to forget them is to have all the universe against you, God and oneself for enemies, and only the devil and the dragon for friends."

There is no doubt about this tyranny of the past, and that a man's transgressions come back to fight on the side of his enemies just when he needs assis-

tance. But, save for the purpose of warning people from sin and showing them how hard the way of the transgressor is, nothing is gained by such a recital. The question is, can we deal with the medicated past in some other way? Is it possible to throw off the tyranny of yesterday's transgression and get strength and power out of our past, instead of weakness and fear? The Gospel of Jesus Christ gives a great affirmative answer to that question. It proclaims the truth that God is willing and ready to forget and forgive our transgressions, and that therefore we can forget them and reach forward unto the things which are before.

That was what St. Paul did. He may have been thinking of past achievements, and how he would not rest with them, when he said, "I count not myself to have apprehended: but . . . . forgetting those things which are behind . . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." But there were other things in the past. There was the dark chapter of his opposition to Christ and his persecution of the Church, when he breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the followers of Jesus, and haling them to prison, compelled them to blaspheme the name they loved and revered. It was Paul who took an active part in the stoning of Stephen, the first martry. When he looked back, Paul must have heard the moans and

the prayers of Stephen and the groans of others whom he had persecuted, and perhaps done to death. So Frederick Myers in his great poem, "St. Paul," makes Paul say:

> "Saint, did I say? With your remembered faces,
> Dear men and women whom I sought and slew.
> Ah! when we mingle in the heavenly places,
> How will I weep to Stephen and to you.
>
> "Oh, for the strain that rang to our reviling
> Still when the bruised limbs sank upon the sod,
> Oh! for the eyes that looked their last in smiling,
> Last on this world here, but their first on God."

There must have been times when this persecuting past came back to Paul with terrific power. Yet, he did not permit the past to rule him. Dark as its sin had been, he knew that the grace of God was greater and deeper. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." He had obtained mercy, blasphemer and persecutor though he was, that he might be for all time an example of the saving love and power of Christ. So whenever that past rose up to endeavor to restrain him, or to humiliate him, Paul said, "Forgetting those things which are behind, I press towards the mark."

Peter was another great preacher and saint who had a dark chapter in his past. Nothing could be darker than Peter's cruel and brutal denial and disownment of his Lord, and that when Jesus was in

the hands of His enemies. Yet, when Jesus looked upon Peter, Peter went out and wept bitterly. He remembered, too, the prayer of Jesus, how Jesus, when He had warned him, said, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Who can imagine the sorrow and misery of Peter between that night and the Resurrection Day. Some time during that day Christ made a special appearance to Peter, for the eleven told the two who had been at Emmaus that Christ had risen indeed, "and hath appeared to Simon." Wondrous manifestation of Christ's love and care! We have no record of that first meeting, but inspired John takes us through the gates into heaven itself, when he tells us of the meeting of Peter with his Lord on that early morning by the Sea of Galilee, when Christ asked Peter, "Lovest thou me?" And how, when Peter had thrice declared his love, as once he had thrice denied, Jesus told him to feed His sheep. Thus the coward among the apostles became the boldest, the leader of them all. The deserter became the shepherd. Peter must have had hours when that fearful fall and transgression came back to him, but he never permitted the memory of it to intimidate him or enslave him, but turned it into power and inspiration as he testified to Christ and declared to men how precious He is to them that believe.

When Israel was devastated with a plague of

locusts, God gave that wonderful promise, "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." Many a person looking back through the chapters of his biography comes upon pages across which must be written, "The Locust Years." That was a day of folly, of weakness, of disobedience, of transgression. But God in his mercy says, "I will restore to you the years that the locusts hath eaten." Not only is the transgression of the past forgiven; but, in the goodness of God, it can be turned into a source of power and inspiration. One who visited the battlefields of France some years after the close of the Great War, could note how nature was rapidly healing the deep wounds and terrible ravages. The grass was covering again the blasted plains and hillsides, new trees were beginning to appear, and vines were clambering over the broken walls and the devastated buildings. What nature does in her world, the grace of Christ does for the repentant sinner.

It is this marvelous goodness of God which gives hope for the future. Yet this does not take away in the least degree from the solemnity of the Bible's reiterated warning against sin. Avoid every evil and the very appearance of evil because, as we have seen in the case of this man with whom we commenced, sin has a long reach, a never-dying echo, a dreadful power of resurrection. Let every man tremble at what even a single sin can do to his life.

Let every man remember that no sin is too small to condemn or enslave him.

But when in spite of these warnings a man sinks into transgression, then he must face this situation: "Shall I permit this sin, this mistake of the past, to dominate my life, to keep me back from every good thing, from every true word, or sincere effort in behalf of good; or, repenting of my sin, rolling the burden of it upon Christ, shall I do what Paul did, what Peter did, and forgetting the things that are behind, press forward to the greater things of the future, remembering that there is no sin too great to condemn me if it is covered by the blood of Christ?"

An old man in a dream began to think about the sins of his past and wished that he might forget them. He made a list of some twenty things of which he was ashamed, and was about to take a sponge, an imaginary sponge, and rub them out of his biography. But to his surprise, he found that if there were any gold threads running through the fabric of his life, and giving it power and beauty, they had been worked there by sorrow for sin and regret for transgression; and that if he were to wipe out the wrong acts of which he was ashamed, he would at the same time destroy whatever of nobleness or of beauty there was in his character. He found that he had got all the best things in his life out of his transgressions, with the regret and re-

pentance which followed. Thus our sins and mistakes, repented of, can help us in the upbuilding of our characters. In the fires of penitence we leave behind their dross and retain only their gold.

When, therefore, you are troubled by anything in the past, remember these two great texts: first, what God says: "I will remember your sin no more"; and second, what a forgiven sinner said, "Forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Because God says He will remember our sins no more, you and I can say that we will forget them. They shall no longer rule us and dominate us, but bless and inspire us as believers and followers of Christ.

"Your sins have withholden good things from you." JEREMIAH 5: 25.

IX. *"Were you happy during that time?" "Oh, no!"*

SHE had come to the city from one of the best of the rural districts, and with a wholesome family and religious background. Almost the first thing she did was to associate herself with the church in the city where she had come to live. She secured a good position, and life was starting off with every promise of success and happiness. Then she contracted a friendship. The friendship grew into affection, and the affection into close relationships, until within a comparatively short time she was living with this man as if he were her husband. Everyone supposed that this was the case; and to an altogether unusual degree they had been able to hide, even from their mutual families and acquaintances, the real facts of their relationship.

A child had been born and had died. Now another had come, and the thought of this child awakened the better self in the mother and she desired the

blessings of marriage. But the question now was how to get married without thereby notifying their families and their friends, and without giving the consequent shock, that for these years they had not been married. It was a question which neither I nor any other minister could solve.

I was not surprised at the recital I had heard, for I am never surprised at what human nature reveals. It has such deep capacity for sorrow and for joy, for good and for evil. But, after giving what advice I could under the circumstances, and knowing what I did of this young woman's background, I said to her, "Have you been happy during these years?" Immediately she responded, "Oh, no!" And it was the face, the expression, even more than the tone, that struck me, as if to say, "No! There is no possibility of happiness out of harmony with the law of God. There are surface pleasures, perhaps, but no abiding peace or joy. To break the laws of God is to have righteousness and truth take arms against you and to have on your side only Satan and his angels."

Happiness is something that everyone wants, something that everyone seeks, no matter how hopeless and mistaken the path he takes in seeking it. But true happiness is that something for which all the other events and incidents and laws of life are arranged. As a youth, little dreaming that one day he

himself was to illustrate in a tragic way the truth of his proposition, Napoleon Bonaparte wrote a prize essay on happiness in which he defined it as that life which is in harmony with man's organization. There, indeed, is the secret of true happiness. Man is a moral creature, subject to the blessings and the punishments of the moral law; and his happiness, or unhappiness, in the highest sense depends upon whether his life recognizes and is in harmony with the moral law.

I. How People Drift into Transgression and Misfortune

In this person with whom we commenced there was nothing of a loose or vicious nature; nor was there a lack of moral sense. But now she found herself in a quagmire of difficulty, humiliation, and distress. She was a striking example of how people drift into transgression and difficulty.

There are many currents which carry the soul off its course. One of the strongest and most treacherous of these is this current which had carried this young woman so far towards the shores of disaster —I mean the current of friendship. It is a pleasant and easy way to drift. Like a boat on a placid stream on a summer's day, so the soul on the current of friendship can drift far towards the falls of disaster before it realizes what has happened. There

are so many in life who drift, rather than leap or plunge, into transgression and away from right and away from happiness. To drift, all that is necessary is to let yourself go. It requires no pulling at the oars, no striving, no resisting—just let yourself go with the current of impulse and persuasion. But when the soul awakens, it hears the moaning of the bar; the sea is covered with whitecaps; the gulls are crying; and the land is out of reach. It was so easy to get that far away; now so hard to get back.

II. The Lack of a "No!"

Here was an instance where the lack of a ringing "No" spelled disaster. The inner voice must have been saying, No; but the lips did not utter it, and actions did not declare it. The result was surrender, and the tangle of difficulties and transgression.

Here was one who just to please another, fell into difficulty because of an unwillingness to say "No" to a friend. "Thou shalt say, 'No.'" How many have failed because they could not pronounce that shortest, but most difficult, of words; and how many have been delivered and have come off victorious because at the critical moment they could command a ringing "No."

I can imagine that there is among the angels and archangels of heaven one angel whose commission it is to bestow upon youth the greatest faculty and

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the greatest power to protect from evil and to bless life. Suppose I asked this angel in behalf of some young man or some young woman, "Angel, I would bestow the great gift, the highest blessing upon this soul." I ask for the gift of beauty and personal charm; the angel answers, "Beauty is good, but not good enough." I ask for the gift of eloquence; the angel answers, "Eloquence is powerful, but not powerful enough." I ask for knowledge; the angel answers, "Knowledge is strong, but not strong enough." I ask for imagination; the angel answers, "Imagination is mighty, but not mighty enough." "What then, O angel, *is* thy greatest gift?" And the angel answers, "My greatest gift to a soul is to endue it with the power to say 'No,' to say 'No' to itself, to say 'No' to others. For the soul for whom thou askest I give thee this most potent gift, the power to say 'No.' By this sign shall the soul conquer."

III. How One Sin Leads to Another

In this story we have the sequence of sin. One step made the next step easy, and if not easy, almost necessary. One deception opened the door to another. The further she went, the harder it was to keep from going still further. Peter denied Christ once. Having denied him once, it became all the more urgent for him to deny him a second time, and

then a third time. Sin is like a chain which is ever forging another link. One false step leads easily to another.

"O, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

IV. Why There Is no Happiness in Transgression

I. In the first place, there was no happiness in the course and history of this woman because, even in the preliminary state, she had to encounter the warnings and rebukes of conscience. We say it is easy, so easy, to do wrong. Yet there is a sense in which it is also hard to do wrong, hard always at the first, because the warnings and obstacles that training and conscience put before the soul must be overleaped.

2. Then there was the lack of confidence. How could there be trust in a companion who had led her into such a situation? No matter what the affection, there must have been this haunting thought, "He has lied to the world. Perhaps he will lie to me also. There may be another woman."

3. She could not be happy because of the absence of respect, respect for herself, respect for her companion. Respect is the highest thing that one soul can evoke from another. It is the highest honor that one soul can bestow upon another. Respect is

better than admiration, better than praise, better even than affection, because it endures longer. But here there could be no mutual respect, hence no happiness.

4. There was no happiness because the daily life was a daily lie, a notification to relatives, friends, and the public that a state existed which did not exist. The soul was made for truth; and although there are a thousand ways in which it is trapped into insincerity and hypocrisy, no one ever found happiness in such a state.

5. She could not be happy because she thought now of others, of parents and friends who would have been shocked and grieved had they known the truth; and most of all, because she thought of the child that God had given her, and of its future. What clouds or hurts another life can never bring one happiness.

6. To my question, "Were you happy during that time?" she answered with an impulsive, sad, and deeply echoing, "Oh, no!" because there is no happiness out of God, and the true relationship to Him. If there were no God, no moral law, no thought of the hereafter, men might be happy in sin. But when we think of God we are troubled. It was of God, most of all, now, that this woman was thinking. When we are wrong with God, there is no chance of true happiness, or blessedness, for that is the Bible's

word for happiness. How true, then, the word of the prophet with which we commenced. "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you."

Pascal, author of the celebrated *Thoughts,* has a profound thought when he says that happiness is not in ourselves, but in God. There are, indeed, by-streams of happiness, such as affection for others and from others, doing good to others, doing creative work, entertaining hope for the future, sitting in the sunlight of pleasant memories of the past. But these are only by-springs. The real foundation and source of happiness is a state of life and soul that is right with God, and, therefore, right with man.

What we ought to do, then, is to cleave to the right. No matter how hard, or difficult, how much it costs, what sacrifice it entails, the right way is the only way to take. There only is true satisfaction. That was what Jesus meant when He urged us to every denial and sacrifice for the sake of happiness and right. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off rather than permit injury and stain to the soul."

Let us watch, too, the drift of our lives. Fortify and anchor the soul with a ringing "No" to every evil suggestion. Never commit the error of doing that which may please another, but which will hurt

your own soul. See how the tide is running. Take frequent soundings, watch the landmarks, and see if any evil thing is gaining ground and power in your life.

But what to do when we have turned away from right, and have fallen into transgression, and have found no peace there, and when the good things of life, with which God would like to bless us, have been hid from us by our sins? Then there is only one thing to do, and that is to turn back to God, who is so kind and gracious and all-forgiving. "There is no peace to the wicked," saith my God; but the same God tells us He hath made peace through the blood

"For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."
II Corinthians 11: 14.

X. *"Temptation never comes as a devil"—sin's disguise*

TEMPTATION never comes as a devil, but always in the most attractive form, as the thing that appeals to us. The one we regard as a bad actor rarely ever gets close enough to us to influence us or do us harm."

This is taken from a letter written to me by one who had heard a sermon on temptation from this pulpit and had been helped and warned thereby. What the sermon was, I do not now recall; but it must have had something to do with the disguises of sin and how temptation works its evil purpose by persuading the soul that its purpose is not evil but good.

Temptation is a subject upon which one never preaches in vain. There one never beats the air. There is one preacher who is always up to date, and he is the preacher who preaches on temptation and speaks to men and women as those who are the objects of temptation. Temptation is a warfare

that never ceases. In some of the caves of Bermuda, or in the Valley of Virginia, deep down in those fantastic caverns, if you pause for a little, you can hear far below you, somewhere in the darkness, the sound of the flow of a subterranean stream. Hearing the sound of the water, you remember that that stream has been flowing on and on, never stopping, never ceasing, while Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome, rose and fell. So through human nature, through human history, flows the stream of temptation.

Temptation is a vast theme. I might speak on the mysterious origin of temptation, or upon the person of the tempter, or upon the armor of defense against temptation, or upon the sadness and woe of yielding to temptation. But tonight my theme is the Disguise of Temptation. It is summed up in the sentence from the letter quoted, "Temptation never comes as a devil."

I. Temptation's Disguise

In the amazing Wiertz Gallery in Brussels, where one sees the overwhelming painting, "Napoleon in Hell," there is another painting of great interest by Wiertz, entitled "The Devil." But he is not the kind of devil who generally appears in art—no devil with trident and cloven hoof and horns and wicked, malignant leer upon his countenance, but a cultivated,

attractive and charming gentleman. Wiertz had the same idea as the writer of the letter to me, that temptation never comes as a devil. He comes as one interested in our rights, our pleasures, our happiness. Were he to come otherwise, were he to come as pure, undisguised evil, with his wicked purpose written on his wicked face, he could exert but little influence or power over us. But that is not the way he comes. He comes as a friend and a helper. It is only when he has the soul in his power, or when he has been finally repulsed as Christ repulsed him, when He said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan"—it is only then that the devil throws off his disguise and reveals himself as he really is, asking boldly for our worship and seeking the destruction of our souls.

The striking thing about the book of Genesis is that what is told us there about man and the beginning of man's life, and the appearance of sin and sorrow, and death in the world, is forever true. The same principles, the same processes, are at work today in men's lives that are represented as working in the lives of the first man and the first woman in the Garden of Eden. This is strikingly so as to the manner of temptation. The tempter came, not as an enemy, but as a friend and helper of the man and woman; as one who would deliver them from an unjust prohibition. He told them that the forbidden fruit would not bring them death at all if they ate

of it, but that it was good for the eyes, good to look upon, and good to taste, and if they took of it their eyes would be opened, and they would become as gods. There you have the working plan of temptation in every age and every heart, under every circumstance of life.

This is so in the realm of appetite and passion. Youth is told by the tempter that the fruit of the earth is good. "Be your own master. Enjoy the good things of earth. The old idea that to drink is dangerous, and hence wrong, has long ago been given up. Join the great majority and throw off these old-fashioned scruples. You have only one life to live, and you might as well enjoy it."

In much the same fashion the tempter speaks about the sins of the body. God gave you your body and its appetites. It is no more sinful to indulge them, to satisfy them, than to satisfy the appetite for food or to quench your thirst. Not only is it not sinful, but it is good for you. It is true that people used to frown upon anything like that, but now it is all different. We no longer think of this as sin, but merely as a social experiment, what we call "self-expression."

That is the way the tempter speaks, and he is mightily reinforced by the natural desires of the one to whom he speaks. But the real facts are hidden. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret

is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell." . . . . "She hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

When Satan tempts men to unbelief in the Bible and unbelief in Christ, for that is always the one great end he has in view—to draw men away from Christ and His Cross, he does so under the guise of progress, or liberty, or higher knowledge. His plan is not to get a man to deny out and out, at the beginning, that Christ is God, that Christ died for sinners, and that we have salvation through faith in Christ, or that there is no hereafter and no soul, and no judgment and no Heaven, and no God. That is not his plan. His plan is to undermine these beliefs by persuading the soul to adopt views of the Bible and of Christ and of redemption which seem at first to be only new interpretations, but which lead to complete denial. That is the way he lures men into the pit of unbelief. It is only when they are hopelessly enmeshed, that he strips away his mask and asks the deluded soul to look on him as he really is, not as an angel of light, but as an angel of darkness. That is exactly what Paul meant to express when he warned the Christians at Corinth against false apostles whose purpose was to destroy their faith

and corrupt their morals. He told them not to be surprised at this. "And no marvel," he said, "for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

One of the greatest scenes of the Bible is that in the Apocalypse when the seventh seal was opened. There was silence in heaven for half an hour. The delightful harmonies, the ascriptions of the redeemed, the lamentations of the lost, the hosannas of the saints, the thunders of judgment and of doom—all now were hushed. At the end of this pause in the history of the universe, the seven angels with seven trumpets sounded. The first angel sounded, and there was hail and fire, mingled with blood, and the trees and the grass were burned up. The second angel sounded, and a burning mountain was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood. The third angel sounded, and the star Wormwood fell from heaven upon the waters and the rivers and they became as wormwood. The fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the heavens was darkened. Then the fifth angel sounded, and there fell a star out of heaven. And to the star was given a key to the bottomless pit. With this key the fallen star opened the abyss, and there belched forth the smoke as of a great furnace, obscuring the sun. Then out of the smoking cloud came an army of locusts, led by Apollyon, the angel of the Abyss. On their heads the locusts wore crowns of gold, but

their sting was in their tail. They had soft, beautiful, luxuriant hair, like the hair of a woman, but their teeth were as the teeth of a lion. What a powerful picture that is of the disguises, the deceit, the lies, the false appearance of temptation! It comes with gilded crowns upon its head, but its sting is in its tail. It comes with soft and beguilding luxuriant hair upon its head, but its teeth are as sharp and cruel as a lion's.

II. How to Pierce the Guise of Temptation

Although temptation comes with such subtilty and guile, and with such clever disguise, man is not left without help in this battle with evil. One of the best weapons of defense, one of the best ways of stripping Satan of his disguise is a devotional knowledge of the Bible. That was the weapon that our Lord used in His own temptation. When the tempter came to Him, and under the pretext of believing that Jesus was the Son of God, asked Him to show that power by turning stones into bread, and again when under the pretext of being a firm believer in the providence of God, and quoting Scripture to that effect, the 91st Psalm, asked Jesus to show His faith in God's providence by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, Jesus repulsed him with a word from the Bible. Each time He said to Satan, "It is written." A few

minutes with the Bible in the morning before you go out into the world, and in the evening when you come back out of the world, are a tonic for the soul, what we might call an antiseptic, guarding the soul against the contagion and infection of sin.

Another great weapon for defense, and one which penetrates the disguise of Satan, is prayer. In a former church I had an old elder who prayed every night at prayer meeting, and always uttered the same prayer, and always in that prayer he would quote the words of the hymn,

> "Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest saint upon his knees."

I liked to hear him quote it. It did no harm to have him repeat it every week, because temptation comes every week, and every day, for that matter. The famous couplet is forever true. What confuses, embarrasses and disarms Satan, deflects his shaft, is to see you on your knees.

The Bible, prayer, and all that goes with them, serve to bring us into the presence of God. There is a legend of how an enchanted cup filled with poison was once put with traitorous and murderous intent into the hands of a king at his table. But the king made the sign of the Cross and named the Name of God over the cup, and immediately it shivered in his grasp. Many a cup, chased and beautifully

wrought with costly jewels, but filled with deadly poison, will be shivered to fragments and its poison spilled harmlessly at your feet when you name the Name of Christ over it.

When the disguise of temptation has been penetrated and the mask of Satan has been stripped from his face, then whether you conquer or lose depends upon *you*. God has said that you can conquer. He has said that He will always furnish and provide a way of escape. Whether the soul takes the way of escape or not depends upon the soul alone. That is the solemn fact about temptation. When the soul consents to do evil and yields to temptation, then I think I can see the Guardian Angels of the soul with averted faces withdrawing from it and crying, "Fallen! Fallen!" But when the soul overcomes temptation, then I think I can see the Guardian Angels winging their way heavenward to carry into heaven the tidings of victory and prepare a great triumph for the victorious soul.

"Your old men shall dream dreams."
JOEL 2: 28.

XI. *"The dreams I dreamed too late"*

THE letter was from a man in Kentucky. He had one of the typical names of the mountain people of Kentucky. He had written me to see if I could assist him in the sale of a book of verse that he had written. Pent up in some little mountain town, his intellectual awakening had come late, so late that he realized there was no hope now, because of the lack of training, education, and experience, of realizing his ambitions and fulfilling his dreams. All he hoped to do now was to make it possible for his children to have some of the advantages of education and self-expression which had been denied him, that thus they might taste of some of the higher joys and satisfactions of life. As he put it in his letter, he wanted "to help give my children a chance to realize some of the dreams I dreamed too late."

My Kentucky correspondent had real poetry in him. There was no doubt about that. Another

might have written me to the same purpose and put it this way—"I want my children to have an education so that they can be and do some of the things I dreamed I would like to do and be, but too late." But this man did not put it that way, for he was a poet. What he said was this, "The dreams I dreamed too late." And that phrase has real poetry in it; and not only real poetry, but real pathos, and real heroism, too; pathos because of his disappointed desires and his frustrated ambitions; heroism because he was determined to use what time was left and what talents were stirred within him for the benefit of his children, for the next generation.

This letter moved me not a little. I receive not a few letters of a similar tone. They come from those who are conscious of latent ability, at least of high desires, but who have been thwarted in their plans and frustrated in their ambitions; perhaps because, like this man, they dreamed too late, and the sun was too far up in the heavens when they started; or perhaps because no door was opened for them. They found no proper stage for the display of their gifts. In the words of the parable of Jesus, "No man hath hired us."

Here is another letter along the same line: "I just returned from seeing the picture 'Dead End.' It left me with a feeling of failure—failure to accomplish any of those fine things I had set out to

accomplish. I looked down at my well-shaped hands in despair. What had those sensitive fingers given to humanity?—I had always meant to write, but I have kept within my heart and soul those beautiful thoughts."

And here is another: "It is more than irksome to sit at the desk of a financial institution day in and day out, expressing my life in terms of bookkeeping entries. Is this the best I can give the world, and the best the world can give me?"

These letters are typical of a great many that I receive. They come from souls who are beating against the bars, souls who have come to a "dead end," and for whom no door is open. Life seems to give them no opportunity for the fulfillment of their fondest desires, for the expression of what is within them. My experience as a minister has awakened me to great sympathy with all such persons. And how many there are who have tasted of the waters of disappointment and frustration!

"I sing the hymn of the conquered, who fell in the battle of life,
The hymn of the wounded, the beaten, who died overwhelmed in the strife;
Not the jubilant song of the victors." [1]

Barrie writes somewhere of how the life of every

[1] From *Io Victis*, by W. W. Story. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Co., publishers.

man is a diary, in which he means to write one story, but writes another; and his humblest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with what he vowed to make it. There is always a difference between the reach and the grasp. What has our Christian faith to say to this great company, who probably represent the majority in the ranks of life, the disappointed, the frustrated?

I. The Intimation of Immortality

The first thing that our Christian faith says to us is that the possession of talents and gifts, or even the desire for them, but with no door opened to the soul, no stage set for the display of these gifts, is a very definite intimation of another life. I always think of that when I read that parable of Jesus, of the men who went into the vineyard at the eleventh hour. There they stood, idle and unhappy, in the market place, eager and willing to work. When they were asked why they stood idle there, their answer was, "No man hath hired us." You can take that saying and put it in the mouth of the frustrated and disappointed, those who dreamed their dreams too late, or found no opportunity for the display of their talents and the operation of their gifts. The world did not hire them; and yet, undoubtedly, within them lie the talents, the gifts, the high desires. I do not believe that God wastes such gifts; and if He does

not, then it must be in another world that men have opportunity to display these gifts. That must have been in Kipling's mind when he wrote his poem,

"When Earth's last picture is painted, and the tubes are twisted and dried,
When the oldest colours have faded, and the youngest critic has died,
We shall rest, and, faith, we shall need it—lie down for an aeon or two,
Till the Master of All Good Workmen shall set us to work anew!

And those that were good shall be happy; they shall sit in a golden chair;
They shall splash at a ten-league canvas with brushes of comets' hair;
They shall find real saints to draw from—Magdalene, Peter, Paul;
They shall work for an age at a sitting and never be tired at all!

And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame;
But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They Are!" [2]

II. That This Life Is in the Nature of a Trial

The old time preachers, moralists, and essayists

[2] Rudyard Kipling, "L'Envoi," from *The Seven Seas*, copyright 1892, 1920, used by permission of Mrs. Rudyard Kipling and Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.

used to dwell much on the fact that this life is a trial, a probation. Both the word and the idea have dropped out of popular use. Yet it is a truly scriptural and Christian idea, and one that brings great satisfaction to a troubled soul. It is the only key that unlocks the rusty lock of life's mystery. A noble dissatisfaction with what we are and with what we have done, a noble discontent or sense of failure, is a sign of man's greatness. The Roman poet commanded that his works be burned at his death, and St. Cecilia broke her harp when she heard in the distance a chorus of the angels.

But this sense of failure and frustration is undoubtedly a part of our discipline and probation in this life. The writers of letters like those which I have quoted, in their unrest and distress and disappointment forget one very important fact, that the complete happiness they have in mind does not exist upon earth. Those whom they envy, or in whose place they would like to stand, are themselves conscious of barriers that hold up their progress, of lands which have been forbidden them, of dreams that were dreamed too late, and other dreams whose opalescent colors faded into gray twilight or dull darkness. There is no ideal state in this life. That was the ruling idea of Samuel Johnson's famous tale, *Rasselas*. The Abyssinian prince, although all his wants were supplied, and he lived in peace and

luxury, became dissatisfied with his closed-in valley, and escaping from it, roamed the world in search of those who were altogether happy. To his surprise, he discovered that such a person did not exist, and disillusioned he returned to his mountain home in Abyssinia.

And what does this mean, this fact that our reach is always higher than our grasp, that there is always an "if" or a "but" to human satisfaction? It means that life is not an end in itself, but that the purpose of it in this world is the training and the discipline of our souls, so as to develop spiritual and moral qualities and fit us for a higher life. I like that striking phrase in the Letter to the Romans, where the apostle speaks of those "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality." What a grand verse that is! And what a grand calling for a man! Honor and glory and immortality! Man's life here is to fit him and equip him for that glory and honor and that immortality.

There are a lot of disappointed people in the world, a lot of baffled souls and frustrated lives, and there is no silver lining to their cloud, and no sweet music in the voice of fate for them, unless it be this—that life's disappointments are also life's opportunities. Disappointment is a sieve through whose coarse meshes the small ambitions and the petty desires and

things of life are sifted out, whereas the big things remain. Disappointments, even when we cannot see it and cannot understand why they have come to us and shut doors before us, and clouded our dreams, are in the providence of God fitting us and preparing us for greater things.

The summer before last, traveling through a wild country in Asia Minor, from Sardis towards Thyatira, I suddenly found myself coming out in the gathering gloom on one of the old Roman roads that traversed Asia Minor. My heart leaped within me, for it was certainly the very road that Paul and Silas and Timothy had taken on that second missionary journey when Paul came up into Asia Minor, having started from Tarsus and having come through the Cilician Gates to the Anatolian plain. His first purpose and desire and ambition was to go to Ephesus, the great and beautiful city of that part of the world, and there preach the gospel. But Luke tells us that they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel in Asia, that is, the province of which Ephesus was the capital. Then they "assayed to go into Bithynia," the rich and populace province on the Black Sea. But there again the Holy Spirit would not permit them. So they turned to the northwest, along this road I was traveling, until they came at length to Troas. I have no doubt that Paul was wondering why God would not let him preach the

Gospel at Ephesus, and why he would not let him preach the Gospel at Bithynia; but that night he learned the reason; for that was the night he saw the man from Macedonia in his vision, who said, "Come over and help us." The door was closed into Ephesus, and closed into Bithynia, but only that Paul might dream a greater dream and cross over into Macedonia, and thus to Philippi and Thessalonica, and Athens and Corinth.

It is a great thing in life, if you can discover the Spirit of Jesus in your sorrows and disappointments. When we get to heaven, and see no longer through the glass darkly, but face to face, I'm sure we shall be often surprised and sometimes amused to discover how the things here in this life that we thought hurt us and baffled us and disappointed us, were, after all, the things that in the hand of God, were for our eternal good.

III. The Greatest Dream of All

This frustrated poet from the Kentucky mountains spoke of the "dreams that he dreamed too late." But there is one dream, and that the greatest of all, which no one dreams too late, and no one dreams too early; and that is the dream of a Christ-like life. After all, the great end is not the fulfillment of this or that desire or dream for this world, but the attainment of a Christ-like character. At the head of the

holy procession of humanity walks always the godly man. We are called, not to the realization of our petty ambitions and desires, although they seem so wonderful and radiant to us, but to "honor and glory and immortality."

I have sometimes wondered about that, why it is that so many of the people who have the most Christ-like characters, who remind one most of Jesus Christ, are those whose ambitions and dreams for this world were forbidden and frustrated through sickness, or lack of the right opportunity, or the absence of some particular qualification. It must be that their disappointment and frustration turned their ambitions to higher things. Now they dream of benevolence, of kindness, of helpfulness, of becoming Christ-like.

This is the highest and most beautiful dream of all, and none dream that dream too late or too early. In Joel's prophetic description of the coming day of great spiritual blessing for the world, himself a great poet, he says this: "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." The dreams of the old men do not fade. They keep on dreaming —which proves that they are young men and not old. In the Spirit-blest age life always has its holy thrill, its heavenly opportunity, its beautiful tomorrow. Men shall go from one dream to another.

The highest and most beautiful dream of all is possible for all, for the Holy Spirit, through whom

we reach the goal, is ready to help all and to guide all. What can compare with a Christ-like man? What book can compare with the book of a good life? What speech is like the golden eloquence of a pure and Christ-like heart? What Titian or Rembrandt, or Rubens, or Velazquez, Raphael, or El Greco, can hang along side that masterpiece of the Holy Spirit, a true Christian life? This is the real goal; this is the high ambition. Dream of that. When we stand yonder by the Throne, how poor and mean even the highest dreams of this world will seem in comparison. Here none dreams too late. Even your old men shall dream dreams. The Thief dreamed that dream when he lay dying on his cross, and Christ told him that it was not too late. But do not wait till then! Dream now! Make God the chief end of your life.

How far, alas, from what we ought to be, and what we might have been, and what we can be, all of us are! Will you accept as final this unfinished and marred and broken character, or like the Great Apostle will you say, "I count not myself to have apprehended, to have reached the goal, but forgetting those things which are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"?

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" Job 38: 31.

XII. *"Your refusal saved me" — unconscious influence*

"YOUR refusal saved me." A well-known lawyer in Pittsburgh related to me the incident and the history which is summed up in that phrase—"Your refusal saved me." This lawyer was desperately ill, and for weeks had lain helpless at his home. Since all the remedies tried had proved ineffectual, his physician suggested that as a last resort he try the cure at one of the well-known sanatoriums of the country. He was carried to the train on a stretcher and conveyed thus to the distant city in which the sanatorium was located. When he had been taken to his room, the physician who was to take charge of him came in to examine him. After the examination, the physician, showing anxiety, said to the sick lawyer that his heart was in a bad way, and that he must have a stimulant at once. The stimulant he prescribed was whiskey. But this lawyer all his life had been a total abstainer, and, although urged by the physician, steadfastly

refused to take whiskey as a stimulant. The physician then had a private interview with the man's wife, asking her to use her influence, and telling her that unless she could persuade her husband to take the stimulant he could not answer for his being alive on the morrow. But his wife, who knew his principles, said, "You might as well try something else; you will carry him out of the hospital dead before he will take a drink of whiskey." Another kind of stimulant was prescribed, and in the course of a week or ten days, the sick lawyer was on his feet in the dining room and on the road to recovery.

The physician who was attending him was the brilliant son of a brilliant father, also a physician. The son had been highly educated and had started in his profession with great promise; but disappointed in a love affair, he had taken to drink, and had gone to the very depths. After some years of this sort of life, he had a meeting with his former fiancee, who held out hopes of marriage if he could prove to her that he was free from the dominion of strong drink. With this as an animating and inspiring motive, the man pulled himself together and re-established himself as a reputable and highly regarded physician.

In one of his visits to his now convalescent patient, he said to him, "Sir, I owe you a great debt of gratitude. At intervals the old appetite for drink

comes back upon me with terrible power and threat. It just happened that I was in one of those dangerous periods when I was first called in to see you. I was on the point of surrendering again to my old enemy; but after I heard your steadfast refusal to take the whiskey I had prescribed, even although I told you your life was in danger if you did not take it, I said to myself, 'If that man at the very point of death, can hold to such a resolution, certainly I can resist the craving for drink that is now upon me.' The crisis soon passed, and I was myself again. I thank you, sir. You did not know it, but when you refused to take that whiskey you were holding me back from another fall and disaster. Your refusal saved me."

This is a striking and dramatic illustration of the power of unconscious influence. I am not trying to take the place of an intelligent physician and tell any one what his course as to medicine ought to be. There is something far more important, far bigger than that in this story. It illustrates in a powerful manner how what we are, what we say, what we do, what we refuse, what we permit, exerts, even when we know it not, an influence for good or evil upon those about us. Very often this unconscious influence will be stronger than our conscious and deliberated influence. This brilliant young doctor who stood that night at the crisis of his life might have resented an earnest appeal from the sick lawyer not to drink;

but this refusal of the lawyer to take the remedy prescribed for him, and on the ground of principle, had a profound and saving influence upon the doctor's life. Our conscious influence is the result largely of purpose and intention, whereas our unconscious influence is the sum total of our whole character.

This is a beautiful text that I have chosen for this sermon. The word "influence" occurs only once in the whole Bible, and that is in this sublime passage from the book of Job, where the Almighty asks Job unanswerable questions. Among the questions are these, "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?" The Pleiades are a cluster of stars in Taurus, one of the constellations of the heavens. We know a good deal about refrigerators and radios and automobiles; but the ancients knew more about the stars, and I am not sure that their knowledge is to be preferred. Little is known about the Pleiades; but the intimation here is that they exert an influence, perhaps on other celestial bodies, perhaps upon our world, its life and its climate. Whatever that influence is, it was thought of by this inspired author as benign, powerful, silent, irresistible. "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades?" A beautiful setting that, for the influence, not of the heavenly bodies, but of the lives of men one upon another. There is

an influence and a power which goes forth from one life to another.

I. Unconscious Influence for Evil

Very often an unconscious influence for evil flows out from one life to another, for none of us liveth to himself. There are indeed those who not unconsciously, but wickedly, avowedly, malignly, and with deliberation and intent, seek to touch and influence other men for evil. They are the direct emissaries of Satan. They sow doubt in other minds as to the existence of God, as to a difference between truth and virtue. They seek to drag others down to their own low level and to stain them with the mire into which they have fallen. They are sad monuments to the fall of man and the power of sin in human nature.

But there is also this other kind of influence for evil, an unconscious influence which goes out from an evil life. There may be no deliberated purpose of doing evil to others, of corrupting others' morals or others' faith, but in the pursuit of their own pleasure or passion or gain they exert an evil influence upon others. There is a tradition of Alexander the Great that he once sent into a province that he wished to punish, a beautiful maiden whose breath was like the perfume of richest flowers. But all her life she had lived amid poison, inhaling it until her body was full of poison. Flowers withered on her breast, and

whatever birds she breathed upon fell dead. The legend embodies the truth of how a noiseless, subtle, baleful, poisoning influence goes forth from the lives of some men.

"Why are men so cruel?" was a question which summed up a long interview which I had with one who had listened on the radio to a sermon on the fall of David (see page 136). A life had been filled with misery and sadness and woe because of contact with another. Yet the other was merely pursuing his own pleasure, not thinking about deliberately ruining or defiling another life. Yet that was what had happened. The only answer I could give to the question, "Why are men so cruel?" was that sin is always cruel, its breath is always poisoning or paralyzing. Sin is cruelty incarnate.

Imagine what it would be like if one soul should meet another in the dark realm of banishment from God and should say to that other soul, "If I had not met you, I would not be here!" When we think and speak on the subject of temptation, it is the temptation that besets us about which we think. We think and speak too little about the sin of tempting others, consciously or unconsciously; for while we may not deliberately and purposely tempt another, still we are responsible for the influence that goes out from our life. When the Lord pronounced sentence upon Adam after the fall, He said, "Cursed is the ground

for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." That is a bit of human history that is repeated from generation to generation. The earth is cursed for those who follow by those who have gone before. There are homes and families tonight that are sad and lonely places, with hard and lonely relationships, because they are a territory that has been cursed by another's sin. In his talks to the boys at the chapel at Rugby, Thomas Arnold, the famous master, made a great point of that. He reminded the boys of the effect of their influence upon others. "He taught," wrote Thomas Hughes in his introduction to *Tom Brown's School Days,* "that in this wonderful world no boy or man can tell which of his actions is indifferent and which not; that by a thoughtless word or look we may lead a brother astray!"

II. Unconscious Influence for Good

There is also a powerful unconscious influence for good that goes out from one life to another, as beautiful, as mysterious, as irresistible as the sweet influence of the Pleiades. When the people in Jerusalem could not bring themselves or their sick near enough to Peter for him to touch them, they stationed themselves in places where at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall upon them, and they were healed. So there is this beautiful, noiseless, shadow-

like influence which goes forth from one life to another. There ought to be more conscious and deliberate effort to influence others aright and bring them to Christ. There is too little of such effort made, partly because we are indifferent to our responsibility, and partly because we underestimate the effect of our witness and influence. It is always stronger than we imagine. But whether we make an effort to influence others for good and right or not, if we do the right thing and live the right way, a shadow of benign influence falls from us. There is an accent, an odor about your life which does others good.

Our companionships, our labors, our attitude in the church, our way in the home, our way of meeting the little trials and difficulties of life, which, after all, and not the great crises, are the real test of character —all this constitutes an influence which touches other men. How true this is about that most potent and gracious influence of all, the influence of a father or a mother. Remember that to your child you are always an oracle, a god. Every word that you say, every thing that you do is moulding and shaping the character of the child. Carlyle, looking back to the influence of his mother's home, used to say that the most powerful thing by way of influence in that home was his mother's example. He writes in Sartor Resartus, "She taught me one altogether invaluable

service. She taught me less indeed by word as by act, in daily reverent look and attitude, her own simple version of the Christian faith. The highest whom I knew on earth, I saw bowed down with awe unspeakable before a Higher in heaven."

Going back to Peter again, from whom we learn so many lessons, we find a striking example of what I am now talking about, our unconscious influence for good. John tells us that when Mary of Magdala came early on that eventful morning from the sepulcher and told Peter and John that the sepulcher was empty, Peter and John immediately started to run out to the cemetery. John adds that "that other disciple" (that is, himself) did outrun Peter. I used to think that the reason why John outran Peter and came first to the sepulcher was because he was the younger and more active man. But we do not know that that was actually so. Now I have come to feel that there was another reason for Peter's losing that footrace to the sepulcher, and that was that as he drew near to the sepulcher he began to slow up because his mind was heavy with the thought of his denial. How could he meet his Lord? What could he say to Him? But whatever the reason, Peter was beaten, and John came first to the sepulcher. But he did not go down into it. All that he did was to stoop down so that he could see the linen clothes lying. But when Peter, now fully recovered in spirit, came

up, without a moment's hesitation he went down into the sepulcher and satisfied himself after a hasty examination that the body was not there, that Christ indeed was risen. "Then," writes John, "went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw and believed." Peter was not thinking about influencing John. He was thinking of his own relationship to Christ and of getting at the truth. But his courage and boldness unconsciously influenced John and brought him that morning to a belief in the great fact of the Resurrection.

What then about this unconscious influence that goes out from your life and that you can no more stop and recall than you can bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades, or blot out the shadow that you cast when passing down the street? The secret of all good influence is fellowship with Christ. The people of Jerusalem took note of Peter and John, when they saw their boldness, that they had been with Jesus. You need not worry about your influence if your life is right within. Heaven, I am sure, will have great joys in store for us when we get there; and how pleasant it is to think, and how important it is to live that it shall be so, that when we get to Heaven one of the most delightful surprises of that ever-opening life will be to have a soul come to us and tell us that something we did or did not, something we spoke or spoke not, something we accepted

or refused, helped to bring him into Heaven. And when we say to him, adapting the words of Jesus in the day of Judgment, "When saw I thee tempted, or despairing, or sick, or lonely, or sad, and did thee good?" he shall answer, "You neither saw me nor heard me; but your shadow, your influence, fell upon me and blessed me."

"You are writing a gospel,
A chapter each day,
By deeds that you do
By words that you say.

Men read what you write,
Whether faithless or true.
Say, what is the gospel,
According to you?" [1]

[1] Paul Gilbert.

"Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

I KINGS 22: 52.

XIII. *"Why are men so cruel?" — The one you tempted*

IT was the reaction to a sermon heard over the air. It was a sermon on David, his temptation, his fall, his repentance, and his forgiveness. There were many who heard it, both of the visible and of the invisible congregation. But there was one soul which heard it and was stirred. In that soul it awakened both distress and hope. Hence, the visit and the interview. There had been no evil desire, no evil purpose, no plan or thought of transgression. But through the influence of another, this soul had been led into sin. Now, whichever way it turned, there was misery and woe: the misery of remorse, the misery of hiding daily the real truth from another loved and honored soul, the misery of fear, the fear of what another who knew might say and disclose. What could this soul do? And what, indeed, could be done for it, save to commit it and commend it to the mercy and compassion of Christ?

This soul impressed me as the very incarnation of anguish and sorrow. In the midst of the recital of its distress and its inquiry as to the path it ought to follow, there came this exclamation, "How can anyone be so cruel?" The reference was to the tempting soul. Yes, the greatest cruelty is to lead another into sin.

In the Bible there is one man above all others who is held up as an example of the man who leads others into sin, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Twenty-three times that is reiterated in the Old Testament, as if the inspired writers would have it remembered forever. Again and again, like the breaking of the waves on the seashore, that monotonous refrain, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," breaks on the shores of the Old Testament record.

Jeroboam was a young man of marked ability who had been put in charge of certain engineering works on the fortifications of Jerusalem. After the prophet Ahijah had predicted the division of the kingdom, Jeroboam fled into Egypt; for the wise and magnanimous and pious Solomon, now gone far astray through his strange women and his strange altars, had been transformed into a man of murderous passions. After the death of Solomon, Jeroboam returned to his native land, and under the foolish tyranny of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, led the

revolt from the Kingdom of Judah which established the new kingdom of the Ten Tribes, or the Kingdom of Israel. Lest the people going up to Jerusalem to worship at the temple should be won back to Judah, Jeroboam set up sort of a mongrel religion of his own. He built the altars with the golden calves at Dan and Bethel, the two extremities of his kingdom, and said to the people, "Behold thy gods!" The result was that the people were led into idolatry; and centuries afterwards when Jeroboam had long been in his grave, what he had done continued to corrupt and destroy the people of Israel. Hence, the monotonous refrain of these historical books, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Forever he is the type of a man who tempts another to do evil.

Temptation is a universal fact. Wherever man is, there is temptation. When you go down into some of the limestone caverns of Bermuda, you can hear flowing darkly away the waters of a subterranean river. Listening to the flowing of that stream, you remember that while kingdoms have risen and fallen, and generations have come and gone on the surface of the earth above you, that river has ever been darkly flowing through that cavern. So forever flows the river of temptation through human life.

This is why a sermon on temptation is always timely. No one beats the air who preaches on this subject. But, as a rule, when we speak of tempta-

tion, we deal with it exclusively on the side of the one who is tempted. We think of the temptations to which we are subject and through which we might betray our souls. But tonight we are to look at the other side of temptation, the side which is rarely mentioned; and that is the part played by the tempter, or the sin of leading others into sin.

Evil is latent in human nature. The seeds of original sin grow in every heart. But that latent and original evil is drawn out by the example and suggestion and invitation of others. It was so at the beginning. Let us not worry about the Book of Genesis or the story of the Creation and the Fall, for it is as modern as today and as true as human life. There sin came through a tempter. The serpent tempted the woman, and the woman tempted the man, and the man poisoned the human race. That is the way sin started, and that is the way it continues its cruel and unclean dominion over the souls of men.

First of all, there are wilful and deliberate efforts to tempt and seduce another soul. This is truly diabolical and devilish. It is the desire to bring others down and to scar the white innocence of another soul. One form of this is to attack another's faith. The unbeliever is never content to be left to himself. He must breathe out his poison to others. Satan always has these emissaries at work, and as the tempter said at the beginning, "Hath God

said?" so the modern tempters strive to destroy the foundations of another's faith and make that soul as faithless as itself. The evil spirit of unbelief always seeks another with whom to live and cohabit.

But more often the effort to tempt and lead others astray is, to a degree, unconscious; or rather it is done for the purposes of the gratification of a desire or a pleasure of mind or body, or for the sake of gain. There may have been no diabolical desire to lead another soul into sin, simply for the sake of making it sin, but only for the sake of the pleasure or gain of the moment. It was so in this case, where a soul was brought into the deepest misery and asked an unanswerable question, How? Why? The question is indeed unanswerable, save that all sin is, at the root, selfishness and cruelty.

Sometimes one's influence for good and evil may be strongest when it is unconscious. This is a dreadful and solemnizing thought; and yet, when we try to live according to the commandments of Christ, a comforting and inspiring thought. No man travels by himself. As Peter on the streets of Jerusalem cast his shadow, so as we go down the streets of life we cast a shadow, a shadow that blesses or curses. That shadow influence goes where you yourself have never gone. By our own sin or unworthiness, or self-indulgence, although there may have been no thought or purpose of deliberately wronging another soul,

some soul may have been kept from coming to Christ, or led away from faith. What a meeting that would be between two such souls, even in heaven, were such a thing possible—for one soul to meet another and say to it, "I am here, a sinner saved by grace, delivered from the curse and bondage of sin, and from the endless night of sin's torment and woe. But it was in spite of you, and not because of you. Had I followed your advice or been actuated by what you did or said, I would not now be in heaven." And still more dreadful and dramatic would be the meeting of two souls in the abode of the lost, and one soul saying to the other, "I am here in the realm of the lost, forever shut out from hope and forgiveness and the face of God, because of what you taught me to do, because of what you taught me to think, because of what you one day did to me." No; hell is not yet dispensed with; and one of the chief devices of its misery and retribution undoubtedly will be the knowledge in the souls of those who dwell there that others were brought to that terrible estate through their words or thoughts or deeds. A man who had lived a godless life, but who before the end came repented and was saved, made this dying request, "Bury my influence with me." Alas, it is a request which never can be granted. Your influence is something that no man can bury.

In my regular course of devotions I was reading

the other day in the prophecy of Habukkuk, and came upon this verse, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" That strikes me as a verse for the times. When I see the advertisements of liquor all over the streets and buildings and newspapers and magazines of our country, the attractive and alluring statements, and the use made of the beauty of women and the appeal of sex in connection with drinking, I remember this woe from the book of the ancient prophet. It is a woe that has never been recalled. And woe, now and forever, to those who by actual invitation or persuasion, or who for the sake of profit and of gain, or for the sake of hilarity, or still more for the sake of accomplishing an evil purpose, put the bottle to another's lips!

I suppose our Lord was speaking primarily of little children, for it was just after he had taken a child and set him in their midst that the words were spoken, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Yet what is true of leading a child astray is true of leading any soul astray. It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. Let

us live and pray so that we shall not share in that woe.

Remember that you are living in the midst of great and solemn realities. You are not a machine; you are not a stick or a clod; neither is the one who is next to you. Souls, hearts, human lives, are the most sensitive things in the universe. Every thought that passes through your mind, every word and every deed is like a hammer blow on the head of a chisel which touches another life. As the sun over plant or flower, so you hang over other lives. Take heed, therefore, to the outgoing of your life, to the echo of your voice, and the touch of the finger of your influence. Woe to those who tempt others to sin, Woe! eternal woe! As Christ said, Millstone damnation! But blessing, and eternal blessing, to those who provoke others and tempt others to love and to good works, and who by their character and by their faith allure others heavenward.

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake," was the sentence pronounced upon the man after the fall. Who wants to have any part of the earth cursed, or any soul scarred, for his sake, because of what he has done and what he has been? Far better is it that for your sake the earth should be blessed. It was said of our Lord that He went about doing good. He who walks with Christ helps to bring Christ back

again to earth. Again men feel His touch and hear His voice, and again He goes about doing good.

"Be noble! and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own." [1]

[1] James Russell Lowell. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Co., publishers.

"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice."

II Timothy 1: 5.

XIV. *"If it had not been for my mother's Bible"*

IF it had not been for my mother's Bible!" This was a cry *de profundis,* out of the depths of anguish and distress, a poignant cry of a troubled soul. As a drop of dew at the morning reflects all the glory there is in the sun, so the tears of sorrow and anguish reflect the greatness of man's life. Man's need of immortality, and his fitness for it, is proved by his capacity to suffer.

This woman, well along in middle life and the mother of several children, had had a terrible awakening to a tragedy of infidelity and abandonment in her home life. It was, in a sense, a common enough tragedy; but the fact that it is common does not make it the less painful and dark to those who pass through it. There was no note of hatred or bitterness or anger in this woman's voice or words—only the note of sore anguish. The waves of shame and humiliation and heartbreak and despair were

breaking over her, so much so that one would have feared for her reason.

Then came a calmer tone, and this was what I heard, "If it had not been for my mother's Bible—" The rest of the sentence was lost in her sobs. But there was no need for her to finish it. It was not hard to finish the sentence. Now I knew that in her black darkness of midnight there was a friendly light flashing. After the awful silence, there was a voice that said, "Be of good courage!"

Let us finish the sentence that was on this woman's lips, for her exclamation was a dramatic and splendid setting forth of the influence of the life and faith of a godly mother.

I. A Mother's Bible and the Restraining and Guarding Influence of the Memory of a Good Mother

What this woman thought and said in her distress about her mother's Bible was an example, and a moving example, of the restraining and uplifting influence of the memory of a good mother. The bottom had dropped out of life for this woman. She had been wounded and betrayed in the most intimate relationship of life. She had been wronged and hurt by the one who ought to have been her defender and comforter. Years of denial and fidelity had been rewarded by treachery and cruelty. It was not

strange that for a little life should have seemed to her a sham and a mockery.

But the thought of her mother's Bible, the Bible itself lying on table or dresser, or taken up in her hands, brought before her the memory of a true, noble, faithful, God-fearing woman. Here was an argument on the other side of life, an argument on the side of life's truth and beauty and sacredness. Here was one woman, at least, who was no sham, no counterfeit. When she thought of her mother, though it was still night and dark, the stars of truth and honor were once more discernible in the firmament.

Her mother! She, too, had taken her weary pilgrimage through life. She, too, carried her burdens and drank her cup of pain and sorrow and passed through the flood. But she had endured, she had overcome, she had passed through in triumph, and now from the other world she bade her troubled daughter to be of good courage and endure unto the end. There was nothing unusual, nothing mysterious in that. Many a son, many a daughter, has found that to be true. Edwin Forrest, who said actors spoke fiction as if it were reality, and preachers spoke reality as if fiction, when asked how he had come unscathed through the temptations of the actor's life, said: "True; I have had temptations; nor have I resisted them on the instant. The

moment, however, when on the point of becoming the inebriate, or the gambler, and disgracing my profession, the words of my mother came up angel-like and checked me in my career."

II. A Mother's Bible and a Mother's God

This woman's mother's Bible made God real to her again. That is the power and benediction of worship, of prayer, of faith, that it makes God real to us, so that He is found of us. Nothing in life is too much for us to bear when that is so. "If God be for us who can be against us?"

The Bible was the book of her mother's devotion. There she communed with God and found that God was her refuge and her strength. Now awakened by the faith, the thought and sight of, the touch of her mother's Bible, this storm-driven woman discovered that the same God was her God.

That was the discovery made of old by Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham. When she had been thrust out of Abraham's household by the jealousy and cruelty of Sarah, the angel of the Lord found the despairing woman by a fountain in the wilderness, comforted her, and sent her back to Abraham's house with a great promise for the future. It all seemed so wonderful to Hagar, that God should have appeared unto her in that way, just at the time when she thought that He had forsaken her, that she

called the place after God's name, "Thou God seest me," for, she said, "Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" In like manner the darkest hour in this woman's life was making God real to her.

Her distress and the thought of her mother's Bible had brought her again to the place of prayer; for when God becomes a reality, prayer, too, is a reality. Now her own prayer, and the prayers of others became a reality to this woman.

> "Ah, whither could we flee for aid,
> When tempted, desolate, dismayed;
> Or how the hosts of hell defeat,
> Had suffering saints no mercy seat?" [1]

All the trials of life through which we pass are permitted of God for our good. A son who had been passing through deep waters showed me the page of a letter from a faithful, believing mother. After words of counsel, advice, and comfort, the letter concluded with these words, "My son, remember that it is God who permits these trials to come upon us, and He who brings them upon us has promised to give us strength to endure them."

Any trial is of infinite value because it is able to bring you nearer to God. I can imagine God saying to one of His angels, "I have permitted Satan sorely to try this woman. Go down, angel, to the earth,

[1] Hugh Stowell.

and tell me how she bears it. Will she have faith? Will her trial bring her nearer to God or will she curse God and die?" The angel comes down on his errand, and then returns to heaven, and standing before the throne of God, reports, "Eternal Father, behold she prayeth!"

III. A Mother's Bible and the Hereafter

When the heareafter becomes a reality, then we have an anchor which holds us fast, a safeguard for the soul. We might well think and do quite differently if there were no hereafter. But life here is not the end, the final thing in itself, but a trial, a probation for the life to come. Hence it is, as the Apostle writes, that our present light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of glory. Viewed apart from life hereafter, the affliction and the trial cannot be regarded as light, but grievous, and exceedingly heavy. But it is light when compared with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory, the everlasting good that it can do to the soul.

When this woman saw her mother's Bible, she thought of her mother's character and that such a mother must survive death. David Hume, noted as an unbeliever, said that when he thought of his mother it was difficult for him not to believe in immortality. The hereafter, and the thought of it, brought a conviction to this troubled soul that life

still held something for her besides the present distress and anguish. Thus her mother's Bible shed upon her path the inextinguishable light of heaven. She saw life in the light of the hereafter; and life is never truly seen, never truly understood, until it is seen in the light of the hereafter and in the relationship of the here to the after-here. In the last part of *Paul and Virginia,* there is a noble passage where Virginia, who has perished in the shipwreck, is imagined thus to address her distracted lover from the shores of the other world, "Life is only a trial. I have been found faithful to the laws of nature, of love, and of virtue. Heaven found my probation sufficient. Now at the source of all beauty, whence flows all that is delightful upon earth, my soul sees, hears, tastes, touches what before it could only feel through imperfect organs. O my friend, raise your thoughts towards the Infinite, that you may support the pains of the moment."

Conclusion

The story of this woman and her trial, and the refuge and hope she found in her mother's Bible, has its meaning, first of all, for those of you who are mothers. It is an invitation to you so to live and so to believe that your life and faith and prayers shall be a strength, an inspiration, a light in the dark night to your children when you are gone from them. It

was when this woman thought of her mother's *Bible* that she found hope and strength. No daughter, no son, ever found help or consolation in looking on a mother's card case, or cigarette holder, or cocktail shaker. But multitudes have found strength and hope when they looked on a mother's Bible. How will it be with you? Will the memory of your prayers, your faith, your courage, your love, strengthen your children in the midst of the furnace, give them an anchor in the midst of the storm, a light in the darkness of the night?

The story of this woman and her mother's Bible speaks a message to every tried, and troubled, and suffering soul. It tells you to put your trust in God. "Trust in the Lord, forever trust." God did not fail your mother; He will never fail you. The very recollection of a faithful, self-denying, sacrificial mother, burning like a blessed candle through life's long night, is an invitation to you to stand firm, to come off conqueror and more than conqueror through Him that loved you. Your mother's Bible speaks to you and says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

Last of all, the story of this woman and her mother's Bible is a message from God to every man or woman, every son or daughter who tonight is far from his mother's Bible and his mother's faith

and his mother's God and his mother's hope. Think, then, of the faith that dwelt in thy mother! Paul told Timothy to think of the faith that dwelt in his mother. The name of Timothy's mother was Eunice. But you know the name of your own mother and can substitute it in that verse of Paul's letter. Put your mother's Bible, and the faith and the life and hope for which it stood and for which it stands, over against your own lack of faith and hope, over against the sham joys, the corrupting associations, the painted pleasures of this godless world. Think of your mother's prayers on your behalf. May these recollections strengthen and comfort and establish many a soul this day and draw all of us nearer to God.

"O mother, when I think of thee,
'Tis but a step to Calvary,
Thy gentle hand upon my brow
Is leading me to Jesus now."

"And the voices of them . . . . prevailed." LUKE 23: 23.

XV. *"Then I hear another voice"*

"THEN I hear another voice." I thought he had reached a decision, and that on a not distant day he would ratify that decision by a public confession of his faith in Christ. There appeared to be no great obstacle in his path, no crimson transgression of yesterday that held him back, and no deep perplexity about any point of Christian doctrine. Yet when I urged him to put himself on record and become a member of Christ's Church, he disappointed me by postponing, drawing back, and finally drifting out of my acquaintanceship and influence. So far as I know, he never took that great step, that step which can never be anything but sacred and beautiful, when a human soul chooses Christ for time and for eternity.

When I pressed him for an explanation of his course, wondering just what it was that held him back, he said to me: "I know that what you urge me to do is right. I even feel that I would like to do

it. When I am in the church listening to the sermon, I hear a voice which tells me I ought to be a Christian and have a place in the church of Christ's disciples. I feel sure then that I will obey that voice, for I know that it speaks for my true and better self; but when I go away from the church, then I hear another voice."

That other voice! It is always sounding in the breast of man. How many have been kept back from the right action here in this life and from Christ and Eternal Life because they have heeded and obeyed the persuasion of that second voice. There was something inevitably sad about the case of this man. He was not one who did not see his duty; nor one who did not appreciate the meaning of Christian truth and faith; but one who, persuaded by the sound of that second voice, turned away from Christ. I felt, too, that he must have gone away sorrowful, as did the young man in the Gospels who went away from Christ. Whatever the real or alleged reason, it is always a sad thing when a soul goes away from Christ.

One might have thought that there was an element of necessity in the man's attitude. But whatever he did, he did, not out of a fatal necessity, but out of his own free will and choice. Why, one might ask, did he obey the second voice rather than the first? Ah, there is one of the deep mysteries of human life

and destiny. Could you answer that, you would know all that there is in man. How little we know! Yet this much we do know, that man hears two different opposing voices speaking to him, and that he obeys one or the other, and that his life and destiny are shaped according to the voice which he obeys.

This man who gave me the account of the conflict within his breast, of the two voices, was doing more than merely describing his own heart. He was describing human nature, for man everywhere hears speaking within him the voice of God and the voice of the world. How profound, after all, is the deep simplicity of the Book of Genesis, where man starts in this world in the Garden of Eden with a conflict between two voices. "God said" and the "serpent said," and the destiny of the human race hinged upon the answer that man made. Still men are thrust out of the Garden of their innocence and their happiness through refusing to obey the voice of God and through obeying the second voice. I wonder if those voices are echoing and conflicting in human hearts here tonight. I have no doubt that this is so, and under this usual and similar and commonplace surface, could we but lift the curtain which shrouds the human heart and breast, we should hear clearly the accents of these two voices.

The voice is a wonderful thing!

"Oh, how wonderful is the human voice;
It is indeed the organ of the soul."

When King Lear came in from the heath with his dead daughter in his arms, he looked down upon her and said:

"Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!
What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman."

The voice is the perfect medium and expression of the soul, and the secrets of character are immediately revealed by the human voice. "Thy speech betrayeth thee."

I. How These Voices Conflict in Human Conduct

Here is the voice of ambition and self-gratification. It tells man to arise and to seize what he desires, to think only of himself and his own advancement and welfare, it tells him to push his own interests without regard to the feelings or the interests of others. But that voice is not left unchallenged or uninterrupted. Upon its music there breaks the sound of another voice which reminds the man that the great thing in life is not what we get or hold, but what we are, and that in seeking our own desires and following our own ambitions we cannot think of ourselves alone. No man can stand by himself. He is either for the

world or against it. This other voice tells him of other hearts and other desires and other interests and other feelings, and holds up before him the model and example of Him who said that He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Roughly speaking, you can divide the world into those two classes—those who heed and hear and follow the voice which tells them to seek merely their own pleasures and desires and purposes; and those who, while hearing that voice, are not unmindful of the other voice which tells them that he that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it.

In the great German story of the war, *All Quiet on the Western Front,* there is a beautiful human incident. The German soldier during one of the great offensives, hiding in his shell hole, feels the body of an enemy fall upon him. At once he plunges his bayonet into the body of the foe. Then, when the light dawns, he sees the man lying there, sore wounded and dying. The national passion subsides and the human feeling comes to the surface, and he endeavors to do something that will ease the suffering of the man whom he has all but killed. The wounded Frenchman is unable to move, but when the German comes towards him his wide-open eyes show immediate and fearful fright. As best he can, the German tells the dying Frenchman that all he wants to do is help him, and to prove that, he gently

strokes his brow, and then takes out his own dressing and applies it to the wounds which but a little while ago he himself had made with his bayonet. There the two voices were clashing. The world is rent with suffering, devastated and sorrowing, because men heed the first voice and forget the second.

Voices there are which urge a man to make a gain or take a profit or stand in a place at the sacrifice of absolute honor and truth. But that voice, too, is never permitted to speak alone. Another voice always speaks and shows to a man how, when he takes such a course, he is stripping himself of that which is his most valuable possession—his own self-respect. In the great tale, *Les Miserables,* Jean Valjean is a perfect illustration of what we are trying to get at—the conflict of the two voices, the angel and the devil, within the man.

Outside of the Four Gospels, where the soul-struggle of Christ with evil is described, there are few pictures of the battle of the divine with the evil in the human heart so clear and so vivid as that which Victor Hugo paints of his hero, Jean Valjean. The ex-convict and jailbird, after a score or more of years had succeeded in blotting out his past. All that he had made was only a hole in which he had buried his name. He had become the mayor of a provincial town, a manufacturer whose chimneys smoked as far as the eye could range. His deeds of

mercy and kindness had made his name blessed among the poor and unfortunate. Jean Valjean, the Toulon convict, the dangerous criminal, was forever dead. But one day he came suddenly back to life. The honored and prosperous mayor learned that in a neighboring town an old man, arrested for stealing a branch with apples, had been discovered to be none other than the long sought and notorious Jean Valjean. The news precipitated the crisis in the soul of the real Jean Valjean. Should he keep silent, and let the innocent old man be sent back to the galleys, or should he go at once and reveal himself as Jean Valjean? His first impulse was to go, but his soul recoiled in horror from that first heroism. Should he remain in paradise and become a demon, or go to hell and become an angel? When he went to his room he put out the light and sat in darkness, for it seemed to him that God was looking into his soul. If he were only young again! But to be addressed in his old age as "thou" by any one who pleased; to be searched by the convict guard; to receive the galley-sergeant's cudgelings; to wear iron-bound shoes on his bare feet; to have to stretch out his leg night and morning to the hammer of the roundsman; to submit to the curiosity of strangers, who would be told, "That man yonder is the famous Jean Valjean, who was Mayor of M. sur M.," and at night dripping with perspiration, overwhelmed with lassitude, their green

caps drawn over their eyes, to remount, two by two, the ladder staircase of the galleys beneath the sergeant's whip. No wonder that his soul recoiled in horror. The cup of bitterness was held to his lips, but he thrust it aside, with the instinct of self-preservation.

Out of a secret closet in the wall he drew a blue linen blouse, an old pair of trousers, an old knapsack, and a huge cudgel shod with iron at both ends. These were the last threads which attached him to the old Jean Valjean. He threw them into the fire, and then seized the candlesticks which the bishop had given him, and flung them into the flame. But a voice said, "Jean Valjean, there will be many voices around you which will bless you, and only one which will curse you in the dark. All those benedictions will fall back before they reach heaven, and only the malediction will ascend to God." This made him take the candlesticks out of the fire and replace them on the mantel. All through the night he fought his awful battle, until, in the morning, his servant told him that the carriage he had ordered to take him to the town where the old man was on trial was at the door.

The next day as the President of the Court was about to pronounce sentence, the true convict stood up before the Court and said, "I am Jean Valjean." When some thought that he was mad and others

pitied him for the sacrifice he had made, he said, as he left the courtroom: "All of you consider me worthy of pity, do you not? When I think what I was on the point of doing, I consider that I am to be envied. God, who is on High, looks down on what I am doing at this moment, and that suffices."

Again, the voice of malice and hate and resentment and revenge sets up its raucous croaking in a man's breast. It repeats to him a thousand times the real or imaginary hurt and slight which he has suffered. If his wound is about to heal, they tear it open and display it anew to him. This voice bids him arise and avenge himself and holds out to him the delusion that the highest joy will be the joy of venting his anger and satisfying his revenge. But another voice, too, is speaking—the voice which tells him to consider himself, to remember the frailty of human nature and the brevity of human life, and how all at length come unto the grave. This voice speaks sweetly of forgiveness and echoes the words of Jesus, "Love your enemies, pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"; it tells him that life is hard enough without making it harder by carrying a burden of resentment and of hate. This is the voice which sounds in the storm and whirlwind of man's anger and hate, like the singing of a bird in the midst of a thunderstorm.

Then there is the voice of doubt and despair.

Tennyson in his famous poem, "The Two Voices," speaks of the clashing of the voice of doubt and the voice of faith. The first voice, the voice of doubt, tells man that life is such—its burdens and temptations, its roughness and harshness—that it would be far better for him not to live at all. But always that answer of faith is heard in clear, ringing, and invincible tones, proclaiming life's sacredness and holiness over against the indictment that life is sordid and mean and ugly.

In John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* we have one of the greatest autobiographical treatments of this moral and personal fact, the conflict of voices within the breast. A voice is telling him to choose Christ, to seek peace, pardon in the Cross. Yet he tells us that for almost three months, and every hour of the day, he would hear the voice speaking within him, saying to him, "Sell Him, sell Him, sell Him!" and he was almost persuaded to renounce and to reject Christ.

Another awful voice speaks to the soul of man. It is that awful voice of passion and temptation, a voice which is always dangerous because we all share in fallen human nature, and that voice speaks to the corrupted and the sinful within every life. It tells man to rise and eat at the banquet of indulgence, to mind neither heaven nor hell, friend nor foe, past, present nor future, in having what he desires. But

that voice is not permitted to speak by itself. In a deep undertone are the notes of warning which tell that the way of the transgressor is hard, that lust when it hath conceived bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. This conflict of the voices, one inciting to evil, and one to good, one thinking only of today, the other of tomorrow, is well expressed in the lines "Years of Eternity."

"Said a woman's soul to a woman's heart:
I shall live forever, but dust thou art,
And despite the fires today that burn
Tomorrow thou'lt die and to dust return.
But the heart replied to the soul and said,
Tho' alive today—tomorrow dead—
My day of life is worth to me
The endless years of eternity,
For I live, and love, and suffer woe,
Yet thou liv'st forever thou can'st never know,
And my day of life, be it bitter or sweet,
No hour of reckoning have I to meet . . . .
Flowers shall bloom from my dust and sing,
From the heart that lived but a day we spring . . . .
So I live and laugh, and sin, and say . . . .
It matters not . . . . the soul will pay." [1]

But however the heart may discount tomorrow and the soul, the soul must pay, and the soul is Thyself.

II. The Conflict of These Voices as to Christ

The invitation to any human soul to believe on

[1] Author unknown.

Christ and receive forgiveness and eternal life forever signalizes and distinguishes that soul. The fact that Christ is offered to man immortalizes man. But whenever Christ is presented, and His claims are spoken, the soul, mysterious though it may be, hears the other voice.

We have a striking illustration of this in the circumstances of the trial of Jesus from which we take our text. Without his own seeking or choosing, Pilate had to pass a verdict on Jesus. Christ stood on trial before him. For Christ there was speaking Pilate's better self, which had been awakened into life the moment he came face to face with the Son of God. There was the still, small voice, too, of conscience, which told him that he ought not to condemn this innocent man to death; and even out of the unseen world, through the dream of Pilate's wife, there came the voice which said, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." Pilate was evidently disposed to obey those voices. But over against Christ was the voice which bade him consider his office as Procurator, his revenues, his palace, and chariot, the comforts and the good things of this life, the voice of the mob, "Thou art not Caesar's friend!" And when he heard their clamant and incessant cries, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate obeyed the second voice rather than the first. "And

the voices of them prevailed!" That was the tragedy in Pilate's life. The second voice prevailed. It is always a sad moment when that must be the last word in the history of a soul where good and evil are in conflict.

So in the chambers of the human heart, voices clash with voices regarding Christ. Christ is not a command, not an ideal, not an example to be vaguely followed, but He is a choice, a decision, and we vote for Him or against Him.

Against Christ there speaks the voice of the spectre of an old sin. I always wondered how much that had to do with the case of the man of our sermon tonight. Was it the dead and arresting hand of an old transgression which held him back and told him that whoever belonged to Christ, he could never be his disciple? Who knows that this was so? Then there is the voice of the sinful habits of the present, reminding man of what he is accustomed to do, what he is accustomed to have, and trying to persuade him that he cannot endure the discomfort and pain of their relinquishment. There is the voice, too, of doubt which speaks against Christ—"Who is Christ? Did He come into the world as the Gospels say He did? Did He ever exist at all? Did He arise again from the dead? Does He exist now? Was He, if He existed at all, more than any other historical person? How can Christ command our affections?

How through Him have we the forgiveness of sin?"

For Christ, on the other hand, there speaks clearly the still small voice of conscience; the voice of the soul's deep need, telling the soul that it needs a Saviour and His cleansing; the voice of our best moods, when we yearn for purity and for peace; the voice of the prayers of friends, and the sweet pleadings of hope.

So do these voices clash in human hearts, in daily life. Only the soul who hears them can decide which voice will be heeded and obeyed. Every life is a decision, and each dismissal or refusal or evasion makes it harder to render the right answer and to obey the voice of God. Each one, too, must decide for himself. Sermons may be preached, examples cited, prayers offered, warnings given, tears shed, but you and I must make the decision.

"And the voices of them prevailed." We know what voice it was prevailed in the case of Pilate. How will it be with you tonight, and tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow? God give us grace, courage, strength to obey His voice.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."

PSALM 55: 22.

XVI. *"I used to lean upon my own strength"*

"I USED to lean upon my own strength." The man had been speaking to me about his troubles and his burdens. I waited for him to add another, and a concluding clause or sentence. But that was all he said. He left that for me to do. I was to draw my own conclusions. He used to lean upon his own strength; but now he was leaning somewhere else, upon some other strength. The sentence marked an epoch in his spiritual history. There had been a complete change in the plan of his life. He had had bitter experience of the weakness of his own strength. It was only a reed which bent beneath the weight, or pierced the hand that reposed upon it. Now he had found something better. He had come to lean upon God. God was his Refuge and his Strength, a very present help in the time of trouble.

One is never beating the air when one speaks on this subject of burdens. A burden is every man's birthright. Burdens wait for every man who comes

into the world. As soldiers on the march carry their packs on their backs, so all who march in the ranks of life's army carry their burdens.

What a procession it is, if we could only have eyes to see it, this long parade of those who bear burdens. There are burdens visible, and some, and oftimes the heavier, invisible. There are burdens physical, the burden of failing strength, or chronic illness, or other thorns in the flesh. There are burdens, too, of lost happiness, of baffled ambition, of disappointments; burdens of anxiety and care; burdens of temptation; and the heavy burden of sin. Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! The army of the burden-bearers marches by! During the day the streets of our city are thronged with people. But late at night the crowds have departed, the army of the marchers has passed by, and the sound of their feet is no longer heard. The streets of the city are left to the policemen and watchmen, the night reveller, and the homeless. But on the highway of life, the night is no different from the day, and at midnight, as well as at noon, we can hear the tramp, tramp, tramp of the army of the burden-bearers.

This is nothing new. One age is the history of the age before it, and the present age is a prophecy of the age to come. Yet there seem to be more burdened people today than every before, at least, we hear more about their burdens. Perhaps this is

because the burdens of today have so much to do with material things, with clothes, and rent, and coal, and gas, and unpaid mortgages, and jobs and positions which cannot be secured. Listening to the accounts of these burdens, one is saddened with a sense of one's limitation, even where the heart and mind would do what it could to help. But, although we cannot lift the mortgage, or pay the rent, or secure a job, we can speak of this great promise of the divine Word—"Cast thy burden upon the Lord."

We may not always be able to see it or appreciate it, for naturally we find every burden irritating, and every thorn piercing. But it is well to remember that if, as we believe, our lives are ordered of the Lord, then each man's burden is suited to him. Rutherford used to say, "Out of ten thousand possible trials and thorns, this is the one which God has selected for you." Socrates had a saying to the effect that if all the misfortunes of mankind were cast into a public stock and equally distributed among the whole species, those who now think themselves the most unhappy would prefer the share they already are possessed of, to that which would fall to them by such a division. In his essay on this subject, Addison tells of a dream he once had. In his dream he heard a proclamation by Jupiter, that every mortal should bring in his griefs and calamities and throw them together in a heap. Into

the central plan marched the whole army of mankind, led on by an aery figure called Fancy, and laid down their burdens of real or imagined woe. Slowly the heap of discarded burdens grew until it reached to the heavens. Then Jove issued a second proclamation to the effect that they now were at liberty to exchange their afflictions and return to their habitations with any other burden they might choose. Fancy stood about and recommended to each one his particular packet. Eagerly the deluded mortals rushed into the most foolish and absurd exchanges. But when all had selected their new burdens, the whole plain was filled with lamentations and murmurings, for their last state was worse than their first. Taking pity upon them, Jove ordered them to lay down their burdens a second time, so that each might resume his own. With that the phantom Fancy was commanded to disappear, and a new figure, the goddess Patience, stood by the Mountain of Misery, which straightway shrank to such a degree that it did not seem a third the size it was before. Each man then resumed his burden, well pleased that the kind of burden which was to fall to his lot had not been left to his own chance. That dream of Addison is the parable of a timely and important truth. However your burden weighs upon you, it is well to remember that it is the burden best suited for you.

Men try to get rid of their burdens, and vainly,

by casting them away. Some try to cast away their burdens in business, others in the whirl of pleasure or society, and others in the night of revel and the cup of dissipation. I hear people say that they like to go to this or that place of amusement, for by so doing they forget themselves and their cares for a little. But soon again they must awaken to the fact of a burden. Alcibiades, the gifted but unscrupulous Greek, was noted as an unhappy man. Someone asked Socrates why it was that Alcibiades, who had traveled so much and had seen so much of the world, was still an unhappy man. The sage answered, "Because wherever he goes, he always takes himself with him." A change of occupation, or a change of environment, is no cure for the burden of life.

The Christian plan is not to attempt to cast one's burden away, but to cast it on the Lord. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." Paul had his burden of sickness, the thorn in the flesh from which so earnestly he asked to be delivered. His prayer was not answered in that sense. But the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul did not cast his burden away, but he cast it upon the Lord, and strength was given him to carry it.

One of life's heaviest burdens is the burden of care. There are two great foes of life—yesterday and tomorrow. An acknowledgment is made of the

burden of care whenever a man contrasts childhood with manhood, and describes his childhood as "carefree." It is a confession to the fact that life is not carefree. How many cares and anxieties there are! The care of sinking health; the care about tomorrow with its needs, and no provision made to meet them; the care for loved ones whose feet are going in wrong paths, or for friends in trouble and grief beyond human comfort or help.

The burden of care is not to be lightly dealt with or dismissed. There is no abiding satisfaction in the reflection that the thing that is a burden of care will one day pass away. An Eastern king, who was tormented with indecision and vacillation, once called upon the wise men of his court to give him some word that would steady him. They tried, but in vain. But where the wise men failed, the king's daughter succeeded. She gave him on his birthday a ring on which were inscribed two words in Arabic, which, translated, meant, "This, too, shall pass away." But the Christian remedy for care is not that. It is to cast our care upon God. Do not try to carry the load of your care all by yourself. When Hezekiah received the threatening and blasphemous letter from Sennacherib, threatening him and his capital with destruction and his people with captivity, the king took the letter and went up to the temple and spread it out before the Lord. He did

not attempt to carry the burden of his care and anxiety for his kingdom by himself, but he cast it upon the Lord. Spread the letter that troubles you out before the Lord. Take at their face value those great promises of the Bible which sound like sweet bells from Genesis to Revelation. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." That is Paul's cure for care. After the same manner, Peter—"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Another common burden is the burden of sorrow and loneliness. One means about the same as the other, for sorrow is only another name for loneliness. How suddenly this burden can come upon one. Yesterday the sky was without a cloud. Today it is heavy and overcast. Yesterday the step was light and the shoulders were free. Today the step is heavy and the shoulders bend beneath the burden of sorrow and loneliness. Sometimes we know where this burden exists in the lives of others. Very often we do not recognize it, or even imagine that it exists, and it should be a great surprise to us to know what a heavy burden of grief or sorrow those who walk near to us in life's procession are carrying.

Few burdens have a wear and tear to them like

the burden of sorrow, if one tries to carry it in one's own strength. In the midst of life's throng and press, in the whirl of events, or in the pastimes of society, or in the prosecution of business, the path is lonely. Here again the thing to do is to cast that burden upon the Lord. In all their afflictions He was afflicted. He who taketh up the isles as a very small thing is well able to carry your sorrows. How grand and wonderful is the music of Isaiah's beautiful hymn to Christ. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

Then there is the burden of temptation. The more men strive and struggle after rightousness, the more they are conscious of this burden of temptation. Sometimes you hear it said of a man, "He has not an enemy in the world." Always a questionable tribute, the statement is also fundamentally false, for every man has that grim foe and adversary, temptation. Everywhere this battle is being waged, although outward appearances may give no clue to it. But if you stop and listen, if you exclude all other sounds, then you can hear the noise of the scuffle, the tread of the feet, the clash of sword on breastplate or helmet, the labored breathing, the groan of despair and defeat, or the exultant shout of victory. No, there is nothing tame, nothing ordinary, about human life.

There are all kinds of temptation. The tempta-

tions of the body, the temptation to satisfy an insurgent appetite, even though hell yawns at our feet. The temptation to profit and gain place or money at the cost of principle; the temptation to hatred, or anger, or envy, or jealousy; the temptation to doubt holy things. Whatever the temptation is, cast this burden on the Lord. That was Christ's method. When the devil tempted him in the wilderness, He fell back upon God and God's Word. When he tempted Him again in the Garden of Gethsemane he called upon God in the agony of His bloody sweat. Christ is an old campaigner on this field of temptation, and having been tempted Himself, He is able to succor them that are tempted. Cast your burden upon the Lord. Do not try to fight the battle of temptaion alone, when God is willing to fight it with you and for you; for God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation afford a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it.

Last of all, and first of all and heaviest of all, is the burden of sin. Whatever burden a man may or may not have, he always carries this burden, for it is as universal as human nature. Not just a few here and there, but all have sinned and broken the law of God. With one it may be a poignant grief over a single transgression or offense of yesterday; or, if this be lacking, then there will be the sadness

that comes out of a realization that our life is not what it might have been, or what it ought to have been. Our sin separated us from God.

This is the burden that Christ came to bear. If there is one thing about Christ which we can be sure of, this is it. He bore our sins in His own body on the Tree. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

In the Abbey Church at Elstow, the birthplace of John Bunyan, there is a beautiful memorial window. Of all the many scenes which Bunyan has painted forever on the window of man's imagination, the one chosen for that memorial window is the one all would have chosen. It is the picture of Pilgrim kneeling at the foot of the Cross, while the heavy burden rolls from off his back. Yes, it is there, at the Cross, that we lose the burden of sin. "So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up to the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more."

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

I Timothy 4: 8.

XVII. *"Does it pay to be good?"*

I HAVE always lived a Christian life, and for years was a great church worker. Within the last few years a great financial calamity came into the life of my family. Through this, the routine of my life has been greatly changed. There are those who do not live good lives at all, while the cloak of society hides a majority. Yet these persons seem to prosper. So, I have often said, Does it pay to be good? People have said that it does, and that all these persons pay; yet they haven't given me any illustration from life where such persons did pay, and how they paid."

The question raised in this letter, "Does it pay to be good?" is as old as the Book of Job, where we have a righteous man afflicted and the wicked prospering. It is as old as the Book of Psalms, where one of the problems most frequently raised and discussed is the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous. It will be asked, no doubt,

to the end of time, and will be answered, not so much by argument and demonstration, as by faith; for divine revelation was given us, not to answer curious questions, but to teach us how to live.

There are many forces at work in the world which would try to persuade men of the uselessness and vanity of godliness and the Christian life. The man who struggles for chastity begins to weary of his long discipline and asks himself if he is not foolish in acting against the law of nature when he sets up for himself so difficult a law of restraint and self control. The man who deals honestly not infrequently will see a dishonest man, a shyster, or a crook, pass him in the race of life. The man who makes an effort to practice the Christian virtues of kindness and patience and forgiveness will meet with those who take advantage of him because he practices these virtues. The Christian believer who tries to keep up the life of worship and of prayer comes daily in contact with thousands of men who look upon the whole thing as a joke, an absurdity, who disregard the unseen world entirely, and who seem to get along just as well without any religion. The young man and young woman who endeavor to walk in propriety and with modesty, regarding their bodies as the temples of the Holy Spirit, will see those who make light of all this, popular, and apparently successful. Parents who have toiled and prayed and

denied themselves for the good and advancement of their children are not infrequently rewarded with neglect and ingratitude. Thus men are tempted to say to themselves, "Is the struggle worth-while? Does it pay to be good?"

But this only serves to make one realize the great opportunity of preaching, of dealing with a question from life such as is raised in this letter. In a world where there are so many forces and persons and influences ever at work seeking to undermine men's faith, to rob them of their belief in virtue and goodness, to seduce them into sin, it is a great opportunity and privilege the minister has to say something, which, with the help of God, may fortify and strengthen another soul in its belief in God and in goodness.

No better answer was ever given to the question, "Does it pay to be good?" than that which Paul gave to Timothy so many centuries ago. It was this: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." I use godliness and goodness interchangeably, and thus the question, "Does it pay to be good?" resolves itself into this question, "Does it pay to be godly?" The godly life is one that is centered upon God. It recognizes that God is the author of our existence and the source of all our blessings, and that the chief end of man is to glorify

God and to enjoy Him forever. Such a life, Paul says, is blessed and profitable, both for this world and for that which is to come. It operates in two empires, that of time and that of eternity.

I. It Pays to Be Good in This Life

There might be those who would agree that godliness is profitable for the life which is to come, but not so profitable for this life. But this is a mistake. Those who dwell on Christianity as a merely negative thing, which forbids certain acts and indulgences, miss the grandeur of faith, for godliness is profitable for all things. No one ought to embrace the Christian life—indeed, he never sincerely does so—for the sake of profit and comfort in this world. That would be a base, utilitarian motive. Christianity has spread and conquered in the world because of its very disdain for suffering and for hardship in this life. It has fixed its eye on another world, upon the city which hath foundations, whose builder and whose maker is God. To lose its life and to lose everything in the world has been to gain its soul.

Nevertheless, as a general rule, it has always been true, and always will be true, that the godly man fares better than the ungodly, even in this world. Godliness inculcates high standards of living—industry, thrift, honesty, purity, and compassion. All of these virtues are real assets to one in the work of

this life. The banks, the offices, professors' chairs, the pulpits, the administrative offices, are not looking for drunkards, rakes, or thieves. Every inquiry of reference, where one has made application for a position, wants to know these very things. Is the man truthful? Is he honest? Is he industrious? Is he sober and temperate? Is he clean in his living? God gave us this world to live in as well as the next, and it would be a reproach upon our Maker if godliness were a hindrance and a drawback in this life. But it has never been that. These are the words, not of a minister, or a church worker, but of a statistician and economist, well known in our country: "To religion we owe our civilization, and to the church we owe our religion. All there is in the world today that is worth-while comes from men filled with, and from groups actuated by, these fundamentals of integrity, faith, industry, brotherly love; and those other factors which come only through God. The Church today deserves the credit for keeping these factors before the world. Hence, it is evident that the people of America have not the bankers to thank for their security and prosperity, but rather the preachers and the churches. To these men we are obligated for our growth and development." [1] It is godliness which has made the world, wherever it is

[1] Roger Babson, *Fundamentals of Prosperity.*

such, a decent place in which to live. Let godliness perish from the earth, and the world becomes a quagmire and an abyss where wild animals devour one another.

In this connection, it ought to be brought out that ungodliness also pays, but in a different way. Lying pays, stealing pays, selfishness pays, licentiousness pays, hate pays. Any course a man follows in life pays its wages. But godliness pays different wages and better wages than anything else. The Christian man may find that life for him is hard. But it is never hard in the way in which it is hard for the transgressor. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." For every transgression, for every deviation from the law of God, men must pay in tears and bitterness. It is this which makes the world so dark and sad a place. It does, indeed, look gay on the surface, in places. But underneath, there is darkness and misery and gnashing of teeth and weeping and wailing because men discover that ungodliness as well as godliness has its wages.

"For the things ye do when your life is new,
And your sin is sinned with a smile.
Ye shall pay full score, ye men, tho' the score
The fates hold back for awhile.
Ye shall pay in the end for your frauded friend,
For the secrets your lips betrayed,

For the lust and the lie to the gods on high.
Ye shall pay! Ye shall pay! Ye shall pay!" [2]

The Christian life has its deep joys and satisfactions. Like the gold of Havila, "the gold of that land is good." Godliness brings a man into harmony with the divine life which was his by creation, but lost and broken by sin. Every area of life belongs to godliness. Wherever a man is, and whatever he is doing, his life has more satisfaction and more joy in it if he is a true and sincere Christian man. The humble, chaste, generous, kind, forgiving man is always better off than the proud, licentious, unkind, and bitter man.

Throughout the English-speaking world today, millions of people are reading Charles Dickens' story of the life of Christ, written for his children, and after three quarters of a century published for the first time. There are two characters in Dickens which perhaps as well as anything in the literature of the world illustrate, on the one side, the unhappiness and ultimate misery of the ungodly life, and on the other side the happiness and blessed influence of a godly life. One is Scrooge, that hard-as-nails miser and skinflint, who shut himself off from human sorrows and human misery. In the third vision, Scrooge finds himself in a low beetling shop,

[2] Author unknown.

or den, where degraded creatures are bringing in the goods of those who are dead. Presently, an old hag appears and empties the contents of her sack on the floor. Scrooge shudders with horror, as he beholds his own personal effects.

"Oh cold, cold, rigid, fearful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command; for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honored head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal!"

The other character, I think the most beautiful of all the creations of Dickens, was the lovely child, Nell. The victim of misfortune from the beginning of her life, and faithful to her aged grandparent in whose breast burns the flame of the gambler, Little Nell wanders to and fro over England, often homeless, fireless, cold, coming in contact with coarse and rude men—gypsies, gamblers, bargemen, furnacemen, and showmen—and yet, wherever she goes, by the sweetness and kindness of her disposition awakening kindness in others and speaking to that better

angel who sleeps in every human breast. "When I die," was her request, "put me near something that has loved the light, and has had the sky above it always."

"She was dead. Dear, patient, noble Nell was dead. And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes, the old fireside had smiled upon that same sweet face. It had passed like a dream through the haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor schoolmaster on the summer evening, before the furnace fire upon the cold, wet night, at the still bedside of the dying boy, there had been the same, mild, lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty after death."

Every heart responds to that beautiful passage in *Old Curiosity Shop;* for whoever looked upon the still, calm face of the godly dead, and felt that their life had been in vain, or that godliness was not profitable for this life, as well as for the life to come?

II. It Pays to Be Good Because Godliness Has the Promise of the Life Which Is to Come

Some have thought, as Cicero and Lord Byron have said, that even if there is no future life, the man who believes in it has a great advantage in this life over the man who denies it, because it exerts a wholesome influence upon his life, fills its horizon with hope, and because, should there be no future

life, he will never know of his disappointment. There is some sense in this; yet the far higher note is that of Paul, who takes the view that if there is no future life, then even the man who has led the best life in this world is most miserable. "What advantageth me," he asks, "if after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, if the dead rise not?"

If the end of our earthly life is a trench ten feet deep, ten feet long, and three feet wide, then are we, indeed, of all men, most miserable. But godliness has the promise of the life which is to come. Ungodliness has no such promise; that is, of a life to come of happiness, and of peace. Ungodliness has the warning of retribution and judgment in the life to come, and that the way of the transgressor, hard enough in this life, will be yet harder in that life which is to come. But godliness has the promise and assurance of the life which is to come, a life of glory, of beauty, and of peace. "Let not your heart be troubled," said Jesus, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." We quote that so frequently and hear it so often, that its deep meaning is apt to escape us. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." What did Christ mean by that? He meant that just as we trust in God, so we can trust Christ, the Son of God, for the great assurance of the life which is to come.

"If it were not so," He says, "I would have told you."

Godliness, not only gives us the assurance of the life to come, but prepares us and qualifies us for the full enjoyment of that life. What would the ungodly man do if he did go to Heaven? Its antiphonal hymns of redemption, its beatific visions, its glorious personalities—all this to him would be misery. Godliness is the condition of the enjoyment of that heavenly life.

This, then, is the answer of God's Word to the question of this troubled soul, "Does it pay to be good?" Yes; it does pay, not only in this life, but through the endless years of the life which is to come. Be godly; be Christ-like; be a disciple of Jesus Christ; hold fast to Him, both for the sake of this life and for the sake of that which is to come.

When the master of Abbotsford, Sir Walter Scott, lay dying, he called for his son-in-law and biographer, Lockhart, and said to him, "Lockhart, I have but a minute to speak to you. My dear sir, be a good man. Be virtuous, be religious, be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."

"So great a cloud of witnesses."
HEBREWS 12: 1.

XVIII. *"Our friends on the other side" — when shadows fall*

I HAVE wondered when looking down on the congregation," wrote one who occasionally worships here, and who sits in the gallery, "just how many sad hearts there are in that large group of people, and if there are some going the same lonely road as I am. Maybe some night you will preach a sermon for just such aching hearts, and I know I won't be the only one there."

One is always glad to respond to a request like that. A great preacher, Joseph Parker, used to say, that there is one preacher who is always up to date, the preacher who preaches to aching hearts.

This request came from the widow of a hard working, self-sacrificing, humanity-serving Christian physician, that kind of doctor who is a chief ornament of our civilization. In the midst of his labors for mankind he was suddenly smitten, and in four days was gone, leaving behind him his wife and two children, and the memory of an honorable Christian

life. Now the shadows have gathered about the companion who remains. She writes, "I think of the many blessings I have, friends, two lovely children, and I believe God is leading me; and then the awful loneliness overwhelms me, and it seems I just can't make it."

There are multitudes of people who could write the same kind of letter, and it is to those people, and their friends, and to all who carry human hearts beneath their breasts, that I speak tonight on this subject of our friends on the other side, that "other side" which crowns all our hopes or drowns all our fears.

> "Ah, Christ that it were possible
> For one short hour to see
> The souls we loved, that they might tell us
> What and where they be!" [1]

At the outset let us humbly acknowledge our limitations when we come to speak on this theme. We have no natural knowledge whatever on the subject, and our revealed knowledge is very limited. "Now we see through a glass darkly." The question might well be asked, "Why is this so? If belief in the future life is a comfort to our souls, and exercises a restraining influence upon our conduct here, then why doesn't the Bible tell us more about it? Why doesn't

[1] Tennyson, *Maud.*

Christ who knew all, tell more?" One of the old time preachers on his death bed exclaimed, "O, that I could go into the pulpit now! What a sermon I could preach; for I have been in heaven!" He had been granted some kind of an uplifting vision that had confirmed all that he had tried to preach. But few are granted such a vision. When we are asked why more information is not given us, the best we can say is that perhaps in our present state we are not able to receive such knowledge, or to understand such a revelation. Even Paul could not, or would not, tell what he had seen after he had been caught up into heaven. All that he tells us is that he saw and heard things which it is not lawful for us to hear or for him to utter. Another possibility, and probability, is that such knowledge might unfit us for the duties of life here. In this same family with which I commenced tonight a little girl had died. The mother writes, "I was wild with grief, and said to him [her husband], if only I could see her a little bit, pull the veil aside, and know she was happy and going on, I would not grieve so." The wise answer of her husband was: "Well, maybe God does not want you to see, for you might not be satisfied to stay here and do what you are supposed to do." A third probable reason why we are told so little about the life to come is that it is God's plan for us to

receive Heaven not by sight but by faith. And when you think of it, it is a much more beautiful and wonderful thing to have faith in Heaven now, than to see it through some kind of a glass, or to learn of it through some kind of a ghost. As Jesus said to Thomas, who believed because he saw, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Little, then, has been revealed about the nature of the life to come; but in great principles enough has been told us for our faith and our comfort. And within the limits, too, of the Bible, of the Christian revelation, we are justified in using our imagination and in giving shape and form to the deepest longings of the soul. We assume, of course, without any discussion, that there is a life beyond. Heaven is the only "land of the living." This world is the land of the dying. Paul speaks of the "visible and invisable creation," and that "invisible creation" is just as real, and much greater, than the visible. Without faith in the life to come, Christianity would be like a great cathedral in darkness, its beautiful windows unlighted and unrevealed by the light of the sun. It is the last great article of the Apostle's Creed that gives meaning and content to the great affirmations that go before it; and that last article, what is it?—"I believe in the Life Everlasting."

I. Our Thought and Our Connection Here, on This Side, with the Dead

There is one article of the Apostles' Creed about which we seldom speak—The Communion of the Saints. That doctrine arose, no doubt, in the early days of the Church and in the time of persecution. You can think of a little band of Christian disciples gathered together in one of the narrow passages of the catacombs, with guards stationed at the places of entry to warn the worshipers of the approach of the persecutor and betrayer. There in those candle-lighted passages, and with their recent dead in the niches of the walls of the passages around them, as they spoke of the unity of Christian faith you can see how easy it must have been for them to make the "Communion of Saints" embrace not only the living believers, but also the dead.

No one can question the very real comfort and satisfaction which the living derive from their thought of the dead, and their thought of them as near at hand. We need not attempt to define this, or to say how much is memory and how much is more than memory in such a comforting fellowship. In "The Bluebird" those who had passed away awakened from their sleep when their friends remembered them. How much in that is memory? Is it just memory, or do the dead themselves, or rather those who live forever, really come near to us?

This raises the question as to whether or not we can communicate with the dead. Some say we can, because they have. But always there will rise the question of self-deception, of fraud, even of Satanic interference, in these so-called revelations of spiritism. The Bible certainly teaches the persistence of the spirit, and in one or two instances, such as Saul and Samuel, and Jesus and Moses and Elijah, shows the living conversing with the dead. But nowhere in the Bible is the possibility of this taught as a ground for our comfort and our hope. We have our comfort and hope in the Scriptures, and in the great affirmations of Christian truth, but not in communications of this nature with the dead. The supposed knowledge and revelation that comes in that way, so far as I have read these alleged messages, certainly are not of a nature to encourage hope in or desire for the future life. Then, if it is true that we can communicate thus with the dead, why not directly? For myself, I would prefer silence, rather than talk with my father or mother through a stranger as a medium.

There can be little doubt, too, that those who put great emphasis upon this sort of communication are drawn away from the Cross. I remember listening a year ago to one of the orators in Hyde Park, London, where you can hear a speech on almost any subject under the sun by some advocate of it. This time the man on the "step-ladder" was talking to a

large group on the subject of spiritism. In the midst of his address he was interrupted by a man on the outskirts of the crowd, who asked, "Why is it that the Spiritualists pay so little heed to the death of Christ on the Cross for sinners?" His question was answered with loud jeers from the crowd; and those jeers were in themselves an evidence that what the questioner asked was true, and that much dealing with the spirits in that way leads men away from Christ and Him crucified.

But when we say this we do not mean that mourning souls will not find great comfort in the thought of the Christian dead and in the possibility of their near approach to us.

> "When the hours of Day are numbered,
> And the voices of the Night
> Wake the better soul, that slumbered,
> To a holy, calm delight;
> . . . . . .
> Then the forms of the departed
> Enter at the open door;
> The beloved, the true-hearted,
> Come to visit me once more." [2]

II. Their Life on the Other Side

We have spoken of our thought of them, and our desire to speak with them. What now of them? What of their life on the other side? Are they con-

[2] H. W. Longfellow, "Footsteps of Angels."

scious of our life? Do they in any way follow us, rejoice over us, and possibly grieve over us?

In coming to this part of our subject, let me say that a great deal of popular teaching and writing on the life of our friends on the Other Side ignores the plain teachings of the Bible that their present state is not the *final* state. That *final* state is entered into only at the Resurrection and after the Judgment. We are not speaking of that final state, for when they enter into it we, too, shall have entered into it, and shall have no need to ask any questions. But when we think of the beloved dead, we think of them as they are now, not as they are to be after the Resurrection.

When we say their present state is not the final state, we do not mean that the present state is not beautiful and glorious, for "the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in the grave until the Resurrection." When we speak then of this present state of the dead, short of the final state, we shall not confuse you with any talk about Hades or a vague intermediate state; for whatever it is, this state before the Resurrection, it is one of great peace and glory. In answer to the prayer of the Penitent Thief, Christ said, "Today, shalt thou be with me in Paradise." And Paul, apparently, in the record of

his heavenly experience uses the word "Heaven," and "Paradise," as if they were synonyms. However that may be, the present state of the believing dead is one of beauty and power and glory.

Then the question arises about their occupations, what they do with these new-found powers of the spirit. If the angels are sent out to minister unto men, why not the redeemed spirits also? Perhaps they do this, consciously on their part, and we are helped by their ministrations, but are not conscious of it. Some time after his wife's death, Samuel Johnson wrote a beautiful prayer in which he gives expression to the pleasing thought that God may have appointed his wife in the unseen world to minister to his soul in this world, and he prays that he may have grace to obey and respond to her ministrations.

I have little doubt that they observe our life here in this world. I know that that belief, while it bestows a deep satisfaction, also raises a difficult question. In homes where a member of the family has fallen into misfortune and sin and brought disgrace on an honored name, I have sometimes heard a member of the family say, "I am glad that father or mother did not live to see this. I thank God that they were spared it." That makes one think of the great verse in Isaiah, how the righteous are "taken away from the evil to come." But then the question

arises, if they witness our joys, our successes, will they not also observe our failures, our sorrows, and our sins? And if so, would that shadow their life in heaven? That is a question that none of us can answer. All that we can say is that heaven will have its answer and its cure for any difficulty, for any sorrow like this. It is far better to believe that they observe and follow our lives, even our sorrows and our transgressions, than to think they have forgotten us, and are aware of neither our joys, nor our sickness, our sorrows, nor our loneliness.

And what about their prayers? *Ora pro nobis*—pray for us—has been a natural cry of the human soul. Can their prayers help us now? The answer of Jesus in the great parable of Lazarus and Dives would seem to be, No. When Dives requested of Abraham that Lazarus be sent back to earth to preach to and warn his five brothers, the answer was that such a thing was not possible, and even if possible, would be useless; for if the rich man's brothers repented not at the preaching of Moses and the prophets, neither would they repent if a man from the dead preached unto them. The answer of Christ, then, to the question, Can those in the unseen world help us by their prayers? seems to be, No. Then we ask the question in reverse, Can our prayers here help them? I do not think they can. I do not see that the Bible gives us any ground for believing in the

efficacy of such prayers. At the same time, I know how natural it is, indeed, how almost inevitable, that a loving, believing heart will continue to mention in his prayers those whom it has loved and lost a while. Nor do I believe that Christ censures that kind of prayer, a mention of the dead. It is at the golden altar, perhaps, at the Mercy Seat, at the place of prayer, that we have sweetest communion with the dead.

That the dead observe us and are conscious of what we do in this life seems to be the reasonable inference from that great verse, which I have taken for my text, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,[3] let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." This comes at the end of the great chapter where the inspired author calls the roll of the heroes of faith—Noah, Enoch, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Moses, and Jacob, and Joseph. When he speaks, then, of the "cloud of witnesses," the primary reference is to these heroes of faith. But certainly there are other witnesses than Moses and Isaac and Abraham and the rest of them who over-

[3] The Greek word came to mean witness, one who testifies, and carried over into English, martyr. But the idea of spectator may also be there.

came through faith. We must add to that list Peter and James and John and Paul and Stephen and Barnabas, and our own beloved dead who overcame through the Blood of the Lamb. They, too, compass us about and look down upon us. The figure is that of one of the great stadia or race courses of the ancient world. As the athletes run their race, striving for the goal and the crown, the marble seats of the stadium are filled with spectators and witnesses. So, in this greatest of all races, the Christian life, be confident that there are spectators, a cloud of witnesses, who behold you, who are interested in you and who long for your victory. They watch; they know; they care; they still love. Think of them! Imitate their faith! Be true to Christ as they were! Seek to stand where they stand!

"A cloud of witness around
Hold thee in full survey;
Forget the steps already trod
And onward urge thy way." [4]

III. When We Go Where They Are

We have spoken of the dead in relationship to us in this world, and our thought of them. Now, in closing, let us speak of how it will be when we go where they are. The time of that momentous

[4] Philip Doddridge.

change draws nearer and nearer. It is nearer to you than it was an hour ago, or a day ago, or a week ago, or a month ago, or a year ago.

How will it be then, and there? Shall we know them, and shall they know us? This is assumed, rather than taught, in the Bible, although it is a reasonable inference from many of the passages in the Bible. For example, the rich man recognized Lazarus in the unseen world. The Bible speaks of the Old Testament patriarchs being "gathered to their fathers," even when, as in the case of Abraham and Moses and Aaron, they were not buried in the graves of their fathers. Paul speaks of having joy in meeting his converts in the day of judgment; and he tells the Thessalonians who had been mourning over their recent dead, and who feared they would not see them when Christ came, that if Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. With this hope he told them to comfort their hearts. But without recognition and reunion, there would be little sense and no comfort in what he said.

I know it is said, and rightly said, that the great thing the Bible emphasizes about the dead is the Beatific Vision, the presence of God. But this need not preclude the joy of meeting and knowing our friends. Even the pagans believe that much. Homer's Ulysses came upon the heroes of the Trojan

war in the other world and recognized them; and Virgil's Aeneas found and embraced with great joy his father, Anchises. Certainly the Christian faith gives us as much to look forward to as did the pagan.

And what about children? Are they still children there? I think they are. Why not? If a child is, as Christ said, the best description of heaven, "for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," why should there not be children in heaven; and if children add so much to the joy and life of this world, why not in the world to come? Let us look forward, then, to the life to come and to reunion there with the beloved dead, and to all the joy and love of fellowship here infinitely expanded and multiplied there. As quaint Isaac Walton put it, after hearing the birds sing one morning on the banks of the Itchen, "If thou, O God, canst give us such music here in this life, then what will the music of heaven be like!"

To all these questions of the future life and its relationships, its powers, its joys, its occupations, the great answer is Love.

> "We only know and prophesy in part;
> But when we think and measure by the heart,
> Life must be social on the other side." [5]

Yes, when we measure heaven by the heart, we are not left in doubt as to its joys, and its satisfactions.

[5] Author unknown.

Paul's great utterance, "love never faileth," applies not only to this life, but to the life which is to come. Love never failed here. We can count on it that it will never fail there. There is a hymn that I can remember my mother singing to her children at the eventide,

> "Bright in that happy land,
> Beams every eye;
> Kept by a Father's hand
> Love cannot die." [6]

No, love cannot die! Love never faileth!

We sometimes wonder what the friends on the other side would say to us if it were permitted to them to bring messages to us. I am sure that they would have wonderful things to say to us—so sure of it, that I can almost know what their message would be. To those whose hearts are broken, and who walk in sorrow, they would bring the message not to mourn as those who have no hope. They would tell their friends on this side that the souls of the righteous are in the Hand of God; that they drink deep at the fountain of peace and happiness and love and joy. To those who doubt on this side, they would bring the message of faith in the life to come, that it is more wonderful than the mind of man has ever dreamed. To those who have gone

[6] Andrew Young.

astray in sin, they would bring the message of repentance and turning again unto God. To those who are tempted they would say "Endure every loss, suffer every hardship, rather than consent to sin; for that is the great tragedy." To those who are without Christ, and without hope, they would bring the message of faith, and of immediate faith, in the Lord Jesus Christ. They would say that it is on this side, and on this side only, that men can repent and believe in Christ. They would say that the only bridge by which we can cross from this life to the blessed life of Heaven is that Cross upon which the Saviour died. Yes, that is what the friends on the Other Side would say if they could speak to you tonight. Hark! I hear their voices, and some of them are pronouncing your name! They are God's messengers to you. Will you hear them and obey them? Now? Tonight?